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ABSTRACT

These six issues of a bimonthly newsletter for foreign-born parents of children in United States schools, contain articles on the following topics: the organization's activities; helping children become both bilingual and biliterate; the experience of bilingual parents; fostering links between home and school; the language of discipline; bilingual early childhood education; cultural and national identity; the relationship of culture and schooling; children's understanding of the cultural biology of race; code-switching; and homeschooling. Book reviews, announcements and activities of interest to parents, and an article written by a foreign-born parent are included in each issue. (MSE)

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The Foreign-Born Parent Network

An Educational Resource and Multicultural Forum
for Partners in Education and Parents of Bilingual Smart Kids

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Alice Rasmussen

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The
FOREIGN-BORN
Parent
NETWORK™
September/October 1996
Issue No. 7

An interactive and multicultural forum
for parent-citizens and partners in education

A multilingual publication of BOND
Alice T. Rasmussen, founder and editor

FBPN/International, AMEMB Box B, APO AP 96546 USA
FBPN/U.S liaison, Isabelle Talpain-Long, 5843 Blaine Drive, Alexandria, VA 22303

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EDITOR

We have reached the first year mark!

As we enter our second year, it seems appropriate to revisit our network's reason for being. We promote young children's proficiency and literacy in their native language as the foundation for successful bilingualism in later years. In the pursuit of that goal, the objective of our publication is to educate foreign-born families in three related areas of cultural interaction: language learning, parenting and the home-school-community linkages. In so doing, we review research findings for their practical implications to families. Our network's focus is unique for its global approach.

For me, the Vietnamese language and culture was rooted in the family, the French language in school. For my siblings and myself, the transition from one to the other was relatively easy. Speaking to my father's dilemma, however, were the measures he took to preserve our cultural foundation: Vietnamese home-school in summer, exclusive use of our language at home, Vietnamese home cooking (we, girls, had our turn at the stove preparing the family dinner). Reflecting on this, I am grateful that my father did what he did. And I want to reassure our parents and readers that *I* did not turn out that bad after all! And so will *their* kids who are being raised bilingual, albeit in more challenging times perhaps.

As supported by the research, early literacy in the native language laid the ground for multilingualism. To our foreign- born parents then, the message is: Raise literate kids in your native tongue *before* they reach school age. With that in mind, the article on p. 3 (Help your child read in your native tongue too!) might serve as an appropriate starter.

One of our members, Isabelle Pollacco, a French-born parent, shares her story on p. 4. Her message resonated with me: Try sitting between two chairs! Uncomfortable, isn't it? But then switch from one to the other. And you might just gain in comfort and versatility! While such a choice may have been natural for us, delivering on its promises remains a lifelong task and a lifetime journey for our families. Jane Merrill, the author of Bringing Up Baby Bilingual (see review on p. 6) might be able to vouch for our experience.

We realize that the road to bilingualism may be a rocky one for you and your child. But in the end, which would you rather your child be *tomorrow*: monolingual or bilingual? With current members spreading the word, we can reach out to more parents for whom bilingual child-rearing and intercultural parenting looms as a daunting task. But it doesn't have to be thanks to the families' testimonials, information and resources our network is able to provide!

Editor

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Our mission

We are an interactive peer resource, advocate and multilingual support network for foreign-born and *all* parents whose lives are touched by the interaction between the home- and host-country cultures. We engage parents in a dialogue on how that cultural interaction affects parental involvement in bilingual child-rearing, intercultural parenting, the workplace, school and community. All rights reserved worldwide.

Who we are

FBPN is an upbeat, multilingual publication based on its founder's experience as a spouse in an intercultural marriage and a foreign-born parent whose personal mission has been to preserve the home culture while thriving in the host-culture and maintaining a global outlook.

FBPN (ISSN 1085-3596) is a bimonthly, multilingual publication of BOND (Business, Organization and Network Development), a global human resources consulting and training business.

What we can do for you

We offer
- parenting workshops and seminars
- consulting in multicultural community and organization development, including global human resources and leadership development, work-family and strategic diversity planning
- workshops on marketing across cultures
- targeted advertising space.

How to reach us

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Membership

In the U.S:

$35.00	individuals and families
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$65.00	commercial, international, for-profit institutions and universities

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$97.50	commercial, international, for-profit

Benefits include:
- a yearly subscription to our newsletter (six issues)
- access to study abroad programs
- a 10% discount on multiple orders.

Back issues are available at $5.00 per issue

Payment

Please mail your check in US$ payable to *The Foreign-Born Parent Network*) **with form on p. 8** to:

Isabelle Talpain-Long, FBPN/U.S. Liaison
5843 Blaine Drive
Alexandria, VA 22303

What's new?

- Our foreign-born parent leadership initiative fits within the larger scheme of the National Coalition of Languages in America (NCLA), a project for which the National Foreign Language Center of John Hopkins University is seeking funding. Our dual focus on native language preservation and the home-community setting in which "heritage languages" interact with the mainstream culture are among the significant dimensions of research and policy NCLA seeks to explore.

- Looking for a benchmark? Check out Bailey's Elementary School! Edna Herrera, a single parent from El Salvador and 'struggling' bilingual will be joining Laura Abbott and Melanie Dunn-Chadwick this fall as co-chair of the Spanish Immersion committee. Edna has been attending the community breakfast club meetings (see our March issue) and no doubt has been inspired to leave her mark. We thought this worthy of special mention as an inspiration to foreign-born parents whom schools are currently reaching out to.

- The Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C. (CAL) has contributed an article on the parent and teacher interaction. We look forward to running the article in its entirety in the next issue of FBPN.

- FBPN's French edition premieres with our September-October 1996 issue. Tell us how our foreign language editions are helping you!

Share with us the gems of your native language!

Our Indonesian parent shared with me that "cheek" in Indonesian is "pipi". Imagine the hilarious denial of her English-speaking daughters when she communicates this routine request to them in Indonesian: "Give me a kiss on the cheek!"

Asiah Vovers (Indonesian-born)

There is no better time than early childhood!

Bilingual and biliterate: Help your child read in your native tongue too! (Part I)

When is a good time to teach your child to read in your native language? If you have been asking yourself that question, you are not alone. According to the research, the answer is: Begin at an early age (although caution suggests that parents should not be compulsive about it). The present issue summarizes two parents and researchers' methods on the subject. While my own experience may provide additional insight, I encourage parents and readers to observe their own children as attentive note-takers. Part II of this article will appear in the next issue.

The primary source for this article is Theodore Andersson's paper titled "Early Childhood: The Best Time to Become Bilingual and Biliterate" (*Childhood Education*, Jan. 1978). He was also mentioned in Jane Merrill's book, Bringing Up Baby Bilingual which is reviewed in the present issue (see p. 5).

About nurturing your child's "literate identity"

"... Do not worry about your teaching or reading technique - reading methodology is a science largely for the use of one teacher coping with a classroom of pupils. Do concern yourself with compensating for the fact that your child will be reading English (as is the case for most of FBPN's families)... Not only is the ability to read important, but identification with the habit is crucial."

From Bringing Up Baby Bilingual, p. 103

Of interest to our readers are two experiments reported in Andersson's article. One was carried out by Söderbergh (1971), the other by K. Past (1976) and A. Past (1976), whose own children were raised bilingual. Supplementing that information is our family's more recent experience with the introduction of reading in French. While Söderbergh and Past exposed their preschool children to reading in Swedish and Spanish, respectively, my daughters were nine and six when I began to introduce intensive practice in French reading (and writing).

But whether it be early or later biliteracy in a non-English language (with both occurring *before* puberty), raising bilingual and biliterate readers should be altogether an exciting opportunity for kids and parents alike. Here are three methods you might want to consider trying:

- the "organic" method as reported in Doman (1964) and Ashton-Warner (1963) makes no attempt to teach the child to read. Rather, the young child manages to read by figuring out her own patterns through continuous exposure to the written words.
- parallel reading in each language as experimented by Past and Past who are both native English speakers with knowledge of Spanish as a second language.
- my own combination of the "whole language" and phonics methods to promote biliteracy in French.

The "organic" method

Söderbergh exposed her daughter to printed Swedish at the age of two. She proceeded one word at a time, using large printed letters in red ink. When her daughter could read the first letter, another was introduced. When she was able to make the distinction between the two, a third word was presented. As she progresses, letters were gradually reduced in size and printed in black ink. Söderbergh reports that fourteen months later, her daughter was able to read any new word "by breaking down words into smaller and smaller units, identifying familiar patterns in new words..."

With Söderbergh's method, her daughter was able to move from the parts to the whole (which is the characteristic of persons with analytical skills). This Swedish parent's experiment was an attempt to verify her assumption that "a child can learn to read at the same age and in the same way that he learns to speak".

Parallel reading in English and a second language

Whereas Söderbergh experimented with reading in her native language, the next method was tried by native English speakers who sought to promote speaking and reading

in two languages. In carrying the experiment, the authors sought to compensate for the lack of exposure to native quality spoken Spanish.

The Pasts applied Söderbergh's reading method in parallel sessions in English and Spanish. Their daughter was two years old when she began to read. When she later enrolled in kindergarten, it was reported that her reading ability was rated at the second-grade level in English and at the first-grade level in Spanish. When she completed kindergarten, she was apparently able to read English at the fourth-grade level and Spanish at the second-grade level.

Although both Söderbergh's and the Pasts' children enjoyed the benefits of total exposure to the language, the note of caution here is that neither experiment was able to quantify the results. The *a priori* conclusion from our reading is this: *Early* biliteracy can be achieved with the mindful dedication of parents with either native-like or functional knowledge of a language other than English.

But if your child has passed the preschool years without having learned to read in your native language, don't panic. You can still do it, but my advice is, do it today or as soon as you can. After all, my daughters only began to read French at age nine and six. As another methodological option, the whole language and phonics combination will be shared in our next issue.

Meanwhile, if you should be inspired to try Söderbergh's method, we encourage you to report back to us or share with us your own or other method. (Generally speaking, the information we share with you is only as good as it is useful to you, the intended beneficiary).

In our previous issue, we introduced love notes as a tip you might wish to use to introduce reading and writing to your child. But any word that appeals to your child's current interest is a most appropriate beginning. Keep it simple though. So, have a good start and write to us so that we can share your success with other parents.

"The risk of losing the native language is real."

...(When Max reached age 3 a year ago), "he refused to speak French. "It was very frustrating," says Pollacco, whose American husband speaks only English. "I was the only one speaking to him in a different language, so he thought there must be something wrong with it. (She) solved the problem by setting up French-only play groups for Max and other French-speaking children."

As quoted in Smart Kid, April 1996, p. 48

About balancing two worlds, two identities

Try sitting between two chairs!

by Isabelle Legaud-Pollacco

Isabelle has been a member since the network's inception. Convinced and dedicated, she is. But empowered, she is too. She shared with us that she did not try as hard as she could have with her first child, Max. However, she is bent on making up for lost time (in French, "mettre des bouchées doubles") with Sara who is two. What follows is the personal touch of a bilingual parent whose English is quite flawless (save for minor corrections). It is parents' stories like hers that highlight today's challenge to foreign-born parents as much as tomorrow's promise to their children.

After a long honeymoon with this country, I felt addicted to the lifestyle. I found the Old World too slow, too small, too stiff.

In 1991, I got married and a year later, Maxime Pierrre was born. Of course, *he* was going to speak French! Ha! Ha! I thought I could simply turn a switch off and get back to the French mode. My adopted language was more than a new tongue. It was sticking to me like a new skin.

With a baby in my arms, my whole world was spinning again. Like the majority of French mothers, I wanted to stay at home and raise my children. I was not missing my country anymore. I was missing my family, the cocoon. And once again, I had to adapt: I went to library programs and learned Mother Goose...

Meanwhile, I was definitely off track on my road to bilingualism. I thought I had plenty of time: after all, Max was not speaking yet! Besides, I was finding switching back and forth between English with my husband and French

with my son frankly unnatural and quite exhausting. On and off it went for a couple of years. I felt like I was "sitting between two chairs."

One morning, I said "bonjour" to Max. He angrily looked at me, stomped his foot and yelled: "In English!" Suddenly, it struck me. The issue was beyond the language. Max would not be able to communicate with his relatives in France. He could not relate to them. What if some day my own child would not relate to me? I felt a gap was growing between us. It became quite clear to me March of this year when we spent three weeks in France, the children and I.

On this recent trip, I learned a great deal about myself. "Culture shock" there was, as there is on every visit back home. However, this time, I was not the only one who had to cope with it.

I had two little American kids with me. Mine, active, playful, secure kids. What if Max wanted to live in his Superman cape? He didn't have to be chic! And Sara who just turned two? Does she have to sit through a three course meal twice a day?

The challenge that I face now is to decide for myself, and the sake of my family, that part of the heritage I want to keep and the baggage I want to let go of. In other words, look back, look ahead, reflect and take a stand.

After ten years of putting down my roots in America, I am now ready to reclaim some of my cultural origin. From the latter's perspective, I have gained a new appreciation for the life that I have built in the free-spirited United States. In this young country where your grandmother's cupboard is called an "antique", history is valuable. And when my children grow up, I want them to be able to go to France and recognize that history that is also theirs. Raising them bilingual is my way of bridging the Old and the New World.

Making that choice and sticking to it with consistency and commitment (the three C's Alice identified) can help me reflect on "why", "how" I do things, on what I hold dear. It has helped me in my marriage too. What I used to see as a personal affront (like making a business call more important than sitting down for lunch), I now recognize as a typical cultural difference between my husband and me.

I now believe that understanding my differences and teaching my children my language will bring us closer in the long run. We share a bicultural background, one which has helped me and, I hope will help them, to become open-minded and accepting individuals. I am committed to using that to our advantage. How about you?

Indicators of success and landmarks shared by proud bilingual parents!

"My 2 year old son has recently been uttering words in Italian on his own. For him, the period of active linguistic production seems to have begun!"

Giuliana Allen

"My 4 year-old daughter's budding interest in my native tongue has been most obvious in the vocalization of sounds that appear to be neither English nor Indonesian. It's something wonderful to witness although the language is only intelligible to her."

Asiah Vovers

Book Review

No gain without pain!

Bringing Up Baby Bilingual by Jane Merrill. Facts on File, 1984. 290 pages. Available at Central Library in Arlington, VA.

The book's jacket labels Merrill's account as the "first-ever home program in bilingualism". It is about the experiment of an American mother of twins with college-level proficiency in French but with the "will, the temperament and the energy" necessary to raise bilingual children. The author spared no effort in the pursuit of her goal, including attention to details, ingenuity and systematic planning.

What I found most valuable about the book is the abundance of testimonials by both parents and the intended beneficiaries, i.e. kids who grew up to be bilingual adults. The latter inevitably report they are glad their parents insisted, even though some did admit to feeling coerced at times.

Merrill begins with two professionals' opinions regarding bilingual child-rearing, one against doing it past infanthood (this one came from a friend) and one in favor. She did it anyway and never regretted it. But even though the parent may

still know best, the cautious advice is not to force the adopted language upon the child if he/she "seems troubled later at talking different".

Merrill's own children managed swimmingly well in a rather "constructed" and artificial, yet informal, bilingual French-English environment. In various parts of the book, I had the uneasy notion that her twins were amazingly docile subjects, knowing as I do of parents whose attempts were actually rejected by their youngsters. Is the issue one of credibility then? No, it isn't. It is rather one of flexibility.

This point deserves a more central emphasis, I think. In various parts of the book, the need for flexibility is acknowledged, yet receives scant attention. It is recognized that children have different personalities and learning styles (p. 220, 221). Language learning is about emotions too, not just a "mere rational accretion of words" (p. 68). How easy it is for parent and child also depends on the language (p. 103).

> "... there are two faces to bilingualism, a subtractive and an additive face... A bilingualism that essentially subtracts the home language by shifting the focus to the new, usually more prestigious, language of the host culture (is said to be subtractive). By way of contrast, "additive" bilingualism... provides opportunities for mainstreamers to "add" one or more languages... to enjoy a number of personal advantages... as a consequence of becoming bilingual."
>
> W. E. Lambert, McGill University, Canada, from Bringing Up Baby Bilingual, p. 274

The premise of the book is: speak first, read and write next. This has been my own too (see p. 3, 4). Although this is my first encounter with Merrill's book which was published 12 years before FBPN's bilingual initiative, the author and I apparently share a number of convictions. Direct translation is best avoided (p. 78). Do ask grandparents for help (p. 94). Children have the ability to "bridge" the two languages by interpreting and translating, meaning, the parents should not need to (p. 90). Family time like say, a dinner conversation, is the ideal time (p. 96). FBPN's three C's (choice, consistency and commitment) help you stay ahead of the game (p. 90-94). Raising bilingual children keeps parents on their toes, in particular parents who lack native-like fluency (p. 109, 110). And the list is not exhaustive.

On the other hand, Merrill and I may be more likely to disagree in other regards. Take Chapter 3 about the language live-in for example. The au pair may well be an extension of me. Yet, in no way would I wish to be an accessory to my child's bilingual journey. In fact, much to my husband's dismay, I have always had, and still have, a mental block about an outside third party caring for my daughters. Indeed, an au pair is not necessarily part of the ideal solution for me.

Elsewhere, Merrill states that "going native is part of any good traveler's goal". (p. 185) Well, up to a point maybe, some might say. Parents are also urged not to worry about reading books that may be too advanced for their child (p. 130)? But wouldn't I need to be concerned if the purpose of reading is comprehension?

Different parents craft different responses to particular situations. Merril reports on some of those. What if your child swears in English and you'd rather hear him do it in your native tongue? Well, you may want to teach him a few non-offensive equivalents in your own tongue! How do you handle rebellion? With indifference or distraction? Readers will be able to fish for ideas while applying some basic methodological principles. Two of them stand out because they are proven to work and were actually shared with our readers in earlier issues. By explaining (rather than translating), you help your child build vocabulary. By using and reusing words in different contexts, you teach them about word usage.

The profusion of detailed resources would have been one of the book's distinct strengths, were it not for the fact that much of the information listed appears to be obsolete. A random check yielded the following: The address of Continental Book Company, a multilingual publisher has changed since 1984 when the book was published. The Children's Center at the U.S. Committee for UNICEF no longer exists. Resources listed include places to contact both in the U.S. and foreign countries, for oral and book materials, language travel, living abroad and group programs. But our advice is to first check the information for accuracy.

Parents may be inspired by love, desire or simply because they have the natural facility as a foreign-born (Chapter 2). While motivation may spur you into action, dogged determination will definitely get you there. Merrill's book makes for excellent reading on elite or additive bilingualism. Folk or substractive bilingualism is not its concern. On either side of the bilingual spectrum though, the clear challenge to parents is maintainance of the language.

Your success is *our* story!

"I find your tips column most valuable and useful. It represents one parent's experience, the one on one kind of sharing which, to me, is so valuable."

Lorenza Marcin (Italian-born, Virginia)

"Your newsletter was a real eye-opener. My Australian husband speaks Indonesian and the two of us feel more strongly committed to passing on my Indonesian language and heritage to our two daughters. I am very glad that you took this initiative."

Asiah Vovers (Indonesian-born, Louisiana)

"I am quite enthused about what you are doing. My husband is American and we don't have children yet. But when we do, our children will be raised bilingual in French and English."

Isabelle Talpain-Long (French-born, Virginia)

"Keep up the great work!"

Greg Chen, D.C. Community Prevention Partnership

"We are very grateful to the P.T.A. for purchasing a subscription of the FOREIGN BORN PARENT NETWORK. This excellent periodical of important issues to parents of bilingual children comes to us from an aware and concerned parent...."

The Spanish Immersion Newsletter, Spring 1996, Bailey's Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences, Falls Church, VA

Get help INSTANTLY!

- Through the foreign-born family interview, we address your questions on the spot and share our suggestions.
- Need practical pointers? Those are featured in the section below as tips for busy, working parents.

Share your tips with busy, working parents

"Experts say it's crucial that you *make* music (rather than just listen to it) with your kids; that you sing together, dance together and create tunes." (*Working Mother*, The Power of Music, May 1996).

In our home, music has always played a significant part in native language immersion. Yes, we listen to music tapes as I am sure you and your child do too. But I also make every teachable moment a musical moment throughout the day! Here is one example.

At age 10 and six, my daughters are still expanding their French vocabulary and learning new ways of expressing themselves. In the process, they make mistakes too. And when they do, I send them a musical cue in tempo: "Rée - pé - tooooons!" (Let us repeat). And both would say the correct statement or word in chorus.

In effect, I am correcting under a musical guise! Do that a few times with arms swinging as if you were the choir director, and your children should get the idea. You will find that even if you may not be musically inclined, getting into the habit can help inject fun into the language experience!

Let us know how *you* are doing and how FBPN is helping you!

Contact us at FBPN/International or thru our FBPN/US liaison, Isabelle Talpain-Long:

Alice T. Rasmussen, FBPN/International, AMEMB Box B, APO AP 96546 (U.S. mail)
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We are listed as a multilingual and educational resource on

Languages and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington D.C. Effective early 1997, our publication will be available in English and Spanish in document abstract form via the Internet (http://ericir.syr.edu)

Our special thanks to

• Isabelle Pollaco for her article
• Laura Abbott, Spanish Immersion committee co-chair and Martha Miller, Parenting Education and Foreign-born (or Minority) Affairs committee co-chair, both of Bailey's Elementary School for maintaining the interchange of information and news with our network.

For young readers and parents

Mon Premier Livre de Mots en Français
Mi Primer Libro de Palabras en Español
Mis Primeros Colores, Formas, Tamaños y Opuestos
Mis Primeros Números
by Angela Wilkes, Dorling Kindersley Family Library.

These books boast superior visual quality and can be ordered from Isabelle Pollacco, a FBPN parent and authorized distributor of the Dorling Kindersley Family Library at tel. #202 244 5881.

What are your favorite titles (either in print or audio-visual form)? Thanks for sharing them with us.

In our next issue

- Bilingual and biliterate: Help your child read in your native/second language too! **(Part II)**
- "Fostering Links Between Home and School" by Anna Whitcher and Margaret Crandall, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington D.C.
- **Book review:** *A Parent's and Teacher's Guide to Bilingualism* by Colin Baker, Multicultural Matters, 1995

Please specify your choice of language edition, complete form and mail with your check payment. Thank you.
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• study abroad: ___ YES ___ NO?
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Language(s) spoken in the home:

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__ writing an article of interest to you and our readers
__ intercultural parenting strategies that work for you
__ your indicators of success
__ how your employer could help your community
__ practical considerations for classroom teachers
__ other

The
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An interactive and multicultural forum
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EDITOR

1 + 1 = 3 !

The whole of FBPN is greater than the sum of its parts. Indeed, our particular hallmark lies in the distinct profile of the network and its members.

We count in our midst first and second generation families (many of whom are not foreign-born) who together help us to articulate the benefits and cost of bilingualism and biculturalism as they have lived or presently live it. Before I left for Myanmar (formerly Burma), I received a phone call from a Flemish-born and second generation parent who recognized in our network's mission her own mother's dedication to preserving Flemish in the home, much to the criticism of outsiders at the time. Without a doubt, were it not for the determination and convictions of our parents, 1 and 1 could not add up to 3! And that is indeed our network's singular strength.

As the many parts that make up the whole, FBPN parents stand out as its most convincing representatives. Our gift idea for the upcoming holidays (see p. 3) came from a brief conversation with a parent before I left this summer. Thanks Giuliana! The network speaks through its parents' voices, at the Capital chapter in the Washington D.C. area, emerging local chapters in other states and recently, abroad as well. Check out p. 2 for the latest developments!

As we welcome new members into the U.S. and international networks, we can look forward to 1997 with trepidation and optimism. I have expanded my own perspective as I meet new parents at the International School of Yangon (formerly Rangoon). Tune in for more from this side of the Pacific in upcoming issues. In the meantime, enjoy Part Two of our article about raising bilingual and biliterate children (on p. 3). To parents and educators alike, the article by the Center for Applied Linguistics (on p. 5) should contribute some food for thought.

Our book selection is Colin Baker's A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism, Multicultural Matters, 1995. The wisdom to be gained from the book (and our members' shared experiences) resides less in the book's answers than it does in the message of informed dedication we care to leave with our children and *their* children's generation.

Enjoy this issue as you have previous ones - ask for our 1995-1996 year guide to help you locate issues you might have missed! As we enjoy the rest of 1996 under the tropics, we hope the upcoming holiday season will be a merry one for yourself and your family!

Editor

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Our mission

We are an interactive peer resource, advocate and multilingual support network for foreign-born and *all* parents whose lives are touched by the interaction between the home- and host-country cultures. We engage parents in a dialogue on how that cultural interaction affects parental involvement in biligual child-rearing, intercultural parenting, the workplace, school and community. All rights reserved worldwide.

Who we are

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FBPN (ISSN 1085-3596) is a bimonthly, multilingual publication of BOND (**B**usiness, **O**rganization and **N**etwork **D**evelopment), a global human resources consulting and training business.

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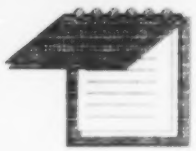
What's new?



- Since 1993, that is two years before the network's inception in September 1995, the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) in Arlington, VA has made available to families of the Department of State and other federal agencies a yearly program titled: "Raising bilingual children: Proven tips from parents and kids". For more information, call the Overseas Briefing Center at NFATC at 703 302 7268.

- Our editor was interviewed in July by the Voice of America. A wire report in multiple languages is expected to reach VOA's listeners concerning our native language and native culture preservation initiative.

- Some of our newest members in New York and Indiana expressed an interest in starting a chapter in their local area. **Local FBPN chapters** provide links in our global network. They also answer the psychological need of those members who shared with us that they motivate themselves better through a local support network. Send for guideline materials if you should be interested in starting one in your area.

- We were delighted to introduce FBPN to parents of the International School of Yangon and its newly created PTA at the open house in September. The school has recently joined our network. Tune in for more in future issues.

- FBPN was the subject of an article in the Arlington Courier of August 18th. There couldn't be a more appropriate way of celebrating the network's one year anniversary and the rebirth of its hometown newspaper.

Clarification

As announced in our issue of Sept/Oct. 1996, FBPN attracted the attention of the National Foreign Language Center at John Hopkins University, Washington D.C. whose initiative called The National Coalition of Languages in America (NCLA) is of particular interest to us. This is to clarify that the NCLA is still in its conceptual stage.

We also want to take this opportunity to mourn the recent death of Prof. Ron Walton who was one of the Center's primary "movers".

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The drama of sounds

Bilingual and biliterate: Help your child read in your native tongue too! (Part II)

Language has always held a special fascination for me. And I have made every attempt to get my daughters to savor its magic too. My own approach to reading instruction in French reflects an integrative strategy of learning in general (see our Nov/Dec. 95 issue) and a particular leaning towards the integration of the five senses, i.e. seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. If you have developed your own method and or strategy, we invite you to share it with our readers (see the Sept/Oct. 96 issue for two other parents and researchers' methods).

For both my daughters, the combination of phonics and whole language has worked swimmingly well. The smooth transition from one to the other has been dictated by the opportunity of the moment as much as by my children's individual interest. But, first, let us clarify the terms *whole language* and *phonics* as we discuss the effectiveness of their combination in the ongoing practice of reading in the case of my six year old, Anne.

Any mention of the terms should include a reference to the current curriculum debate about their respective effectiveness (Education Digest, Feb. 1996, p. 60-63). For my own purposes however, there was little question in my mind that the best guidance in reading should combine both. But beyond the names, the most significant message children should be hearing, in my view, is that words burst with living sounds. And if sounds are the medium used to describe things and events, then surely that medium ought to be the message.

Very succinctly then,
- in phonics, readers practice isolated sounds and graduate to entire words, then connected text, whereas
- the whole language model is a global approach that begins with the recognition of words and phrases in connected text. Passages of text are read repeatedly then practiced by the learner in isolation.

But the more important issue is not so much which reading method works best. It is rather: Which best fits your child's particular style? So, how can you tell?

Research indicates that a child with strong auditory and analytic characteristics would do well with phonics (that is, he/she easily moves from the parts to the whole). On the other hand, research also shows that "young children and poor readers generally exhibit more global than analytic characteristics," (that is, they tend to move from the whole to the parts). This suggests that "whole language could and should be used as a framework for reading instruction (p. 61).

One may not be surprised to read that children who do well in whole language programs tend to have visual, tactile and global reading styles." (p. 62) Yet, when dealing

with such languages as French or Spanish where generally each letter is spoken (as in Bé-a-tri-ce), I don't see how one could avoid phonics altogether. In short, the bottom line may well be that by trying a combination of whole language and phonics and observing your child's response, you may be more likely to identify his/her reading style and match the method with your child's strength. But, does a phonics "session" have to be intimidating or boring? The answer is not at all! This month's tip presents a painless technique on p. 7.

On starting early

"Unlike the adult, the young child does not find it difficult to learn more than one language; he acquires all the languages to which he receives sufficient exposure... Young children...learn two languages in the same way that the monolingual child learns one."

From "Early Childhood: The Best Time to Become Bilingual and Biliterate" by Theodore Anderson, Childhood Education, January 1978

There is a number of effective ways to introduce the reading of sounds. Two of them have worked particularly well for us:

1/ Dramatize by using sound effects and accompany the word with expressive faces and profuse gestures. Its sound will stick better.
2/ Reinforce by appealing to the child's senses and natural curiosity, especially when he/she expresses the interest. Seize the moment right there and then and make it a memorable one!

To illustrate, my girls and I love cats. In fact, "chat" is one of the first words they read and learned to write. Couple the dramatic sound of silence ("ch" as in "Hush!") with your mouth wide open into the French "a" sound. Remark that the "t" *does not speak* - rather than it is mute. (One suggests the lack of sound more effectively than the other.) Then cuddle your cat and spell out the word in big letters like this: CHAT. And the magic spell is cast!

Now how about pictograms in such languages as Chinese? (I am familiar with Chinese for having studied the language at the undergraduate level and for two years thereafter. However, feedback from Korean- and Japanese-born parents is especially welcome here.)

In Chinese, the characters for "man" and "horse" for instance are stylized versions of a man walking and a horse in this way:

As you utter the sounds, display your drawing talent! (Which child doesn't enjoy drawing?) While you are at it too, point out the striking similarities between the pictograms and the actual creatures.

My daughter Anne displayed a precocious ability with words and verbal expression by age one, something which her sister Caroline did not at the same age. This is to say that as a parent, I had that privileged information (say, over a teacher) and Anne was able to benefit from that: I initiated her to reading and writing at almost age six, which is three years earlier than Caroline.

With both girls, phonics and whole language were packaged with a generous amount of acting and exaggerated sounds. The transition has been effortless. Along the way, I have pointed out similarities between sounds and groups of sounds (such as "i", "on" and "ion" as in "télévision, attention"). Note that we don't necessarily go over the meaning of words since the recognition of "ion" is our immediate concern.

Both Anne and Caroline are also receiving a formal grounding in French phonics with La Méthode Boscher (Librairie Belin), although Caroline initially started with whole language only and Anne had that and phonics simultaneously.

I will state in closing that my intention in initiating reading (and writing) in French at home was not to give my girls a headstart so much as it was to anchor their emerging bilingual competences with the written word. My role has been to orchestrate the sounds and effects of the continuing drama of language as we proceed on our bilingual journey.

Reminder

Inquiries and mail sent to Box B, APO AP 96546 should be addressed to Alice Rasmussen, not FBPN. We apologize to those readers and members whose mail was returned by the APO mailroom. For faster processing of your inquiry, please contact Isabelle Talpain Long by phoning, postal mail or e-mail (see p. 2).

Alice's move overseas and unexpected last minute hand surgery have occasioned some disruption in the mailing of FBPN issues this summer and fall. The mailing of guideline materials to those members interested in starting local chapters has also suffered some delay. We apologize for that and for any inconvenience.

Teachers and parents as learners

Fostering Links Between Home and School

by Anna Whitcher Kutz and Margaret Crandall at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C.

For parents of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, issues involving parent-teacher interaction are often a source of stress to parents who wish to help their children achieve in school. Two studies from the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning (NCRCDSLL) at the University of California, Santa Cruz, have identified some strategies to improve connections between families and schools. These studies were designed to help parents and teachers learn how they can involve each other in ways that will be most beneficial to the children.

In case you still have any doubt...

According to The Official Guide to American Attitudes, April 1996, 64% of Americans favor bilingual education.

Source: American Demographics, August 1996, p. 12

The reports, *Teacher Research on Funds of Knowledge: Learning from Households* (Gonzalez, et al., 1993), and *Links between Home and School among Low-Income Mexican-American and European -American Families* (Azmitia, et al., 1994), introduce methods for increasing effective communication between foreign-born parents and teachers. The authors emphasize the necessity of capitalizing on resources that already exist in the home.

Teacher Research on Funds of Knowledge: Learning from Households describes a study in which teachers had the opportunity to meet with the parents of their diverse students in their homes and observe their daily routines. The knowledge they gained from this experience allowed them to interact more effectively with the students back in the classrooms. Having recognized talents and aptitudes the children demonstrated in the home that were not always evident in the classroom, the teachers were able to restructure some instructional activities so that the children could demonstrate their strengths in an academic setting. Based on their experiences, the teachers created curriculum units that tap into these household funds of knowledge. They also invited the parents into the classroom as guest speakers to share their skills (e.g. music-making) with the students.

As a result of these studies, not only were the teachers able to learn about a culture unfamiliar to them, but the parents also had the opportunity to express their concerns about their child or gain information they needed about the school's and the teachers' expectations. *Links between Home and School among Low-Income Mexican-American and European-American Families* identifies ways to avoid miscommunication between parents and teachers. According to this study, parents and other family members can maintain an awareness of the expectations teachers have for their students by staying in regular contact with the school through letters, phone calls, or periodic conferences either at the school or in the home. By offering to meet with teachers at school or even in the home, parents are encouraging increased communication between themselves and the school.

Both studies found that parents can build support for their children's learning by discovering the resources already available to them, such as other family members, books, magazines, and other literature in English or the native language; quiet areas of the house with a functional workspace for studying. Based on the findings of these reports, the following steps might aid a parent who wants to create a link between the home and the classroom. As a parent, you can:

- Designate an area in your home where your children can spread out and work quietly after school or in the evening. Be sure that there are no regular distractions.

- Speak to your children in your native language if you feel that it would ensure accurate communication.

- Have your children describe the teacher in detail. See if your children have already formed an idea of what the teacher expects of students based on the teacher's actions in class.

- Discuss with your children the expectations they hold for themselves and then compare them to those the teacher might have.

- Request to speak with the teacher or another staff member about the school and its expectations of its students. (If you do not feel comfort-

able with your language skills, ask to have an interpreter of your language be available for you at the school.)

- Discuss with your children and the teacher differences between your culture and American culture that you see affecting your children.

- Encourage your children to consult other family members and close friends for advice on achieving in school.

- Become involved with the PTA at your children's school and suggest setting up a committee for foreign-born parents if one does not already exist.

- Set up a meeting with the teacher or another staff member at the school, or possibly in your home, to discuss resources already available to your child.

Teacher Research on Funds on Knowledge: Learning from Households (EPR 6) and *Links between Home and School among Low-Income Mexican-American and European-American Families* (EPR 9), are available from the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20037, (202) 429-9292. They cost $4.00 apiece.

Beyond the language

"Becoming bilingual is more than owning two languages. Bilingualism has education, social, economic, cultural and political consequences."

Colin Baker, p. 10

Book Review

A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism by C. Baker, Multicultural Matters, 1995, 240 p.

Bilingualism: Its benefits and cost

The challenge to a guide such as this one, and any guide for that matter, is to identify specific solutions for every family situation. That is so because each child is a distinctive individual and family resources and needs may be as varied as the societal context in which they evolve.

In a clear attempt to be as practical as possible, the information is presented in a question and answer format under five main rubrics from A to E. These are: Family, Language development, Problems, Reading and Writing, and Education. Altogether, the book hasn't been able to avoid some of the obvious pitfalls attendant to such a format. Those are:

- overlapping answers,
- (from the user's perspective) the difficulty of transferring practical suggestions from one locality or country to another, and
- the difficulty inherent in generalizations "irrespective of the type of bilingual family". (p. 3)

Although the book's wisdom goes beyond the difficulties that are outlined above, let us address some of the latter as a way to guide its prospective readers.

For example, language development questions (section B) are bound to overlap with concerns about language delay and other learning disabilities (section C). Similarly, family-related questions (section A) can't be detached from parental preoccupation with a particular school's ability to address issues that may be specific to bilingual child development (section E). In short, readers will find themselves turning pages back and forth in an attempt to clarify answers.

But practical suggestions too may vary from one locality to another. In fact, readers may find that the actual answer may lie less with the community than with what parents' and teachers' ingenuity can make of the information within the community's resources or their own, however limited or extensive. Writing family stories (p. 124) to preserve the minority language (and culture) is an instance of ingenuity, not to mention dedication.

Then, there is the question of to what extent generalizations can help and in what specific situations. Take the author's overused analogy between nurturing bilingualism and tending the "language garden". While it may be poetic, its usefulness as a functional generalization is in doubt.

The book, however, has its own merits and these can be summarized as follows:

- It is an attempt to articulate practical issues in both additive and subtractive bilingualism (refer to our Sept/Oct. 1996 issue for a definition). As

Your success is *our* story!

"Congratulations on getting this idea into print. It is very much needed. In my experience, it is the high commitment of the mother that counts and a forum such as yours which encourages us over the hurdles."

Mrs. Janet Fraser-Smith wrote to us from Cyprus

"I was thinking that a gift membership to FBPN would make a great baby shower gift to one of my friends who is born of Italian parents."

Giuliana Allen

"I am less interested in bilingualism than in other issues facing the intercultural child and family, i.e. learning about the culture of the parent when unable to visit or live in that parent's country."

Donna Carpenter wrote to us from Malawi

Continued from p. 6

expected, the linkages between school, family and community form a vital dimension.

- Section E (Education) evokes a topical debate in the U.S. about introducing foreign languages in the primary grades. (At the International School of Yangon which my daughters currently attend, parents are expressing a similar desire).
- Section E also includes a brief presentation of various types of bilingual schools (from the "strong" to the "weak") whose very existence is an attempt to accommodate the politics and other problems that may characterize a particular society, be it in the U.S., the U.K. or elsewhere.

Regardless of the location, a number of important messages could be retained from this book:

1/ In defining bilingualism, *functional competence* is critical as in the "ability and use of language" (p. 2).

2/ Literacy in the child's first language ought to be promoted (rather than stifled). As the author sees it, it is a disservice to the child *not* to assess his/her intellectual development level *in the minority language*. To this, one could realistically argue: how feasible and at what cost can schools do that?

Get help INSTANTLY!

- Through the foreign-born family interview, we address your questions **on the spot** and share our suggestions.
- Need practical pointers? Those are featured in the section below as tips for busy, working parents.

Share your tips with busy, working parents

The French "a" and "i" sounds are quite different from the English. A budding learner and speaker of English may easily confuse the two with the English-sounding "ay" and "eye" (in phonetics). This is what I did to lessen the confusion.

Teeth brushing time was also time for phonetics and monkeying around. Since my daughters have always associated me with the French language, the phonetics session was made easier. So, we would go "aaaaaaa" with our mouth open and "iiiiiiiiii" with our teeth shining bright. Sounds were matched with the letters which we would then write on the mirror with toothpaste.

It worked like magic and cleaning the mirror together was part of the fun!

3/ Lastly, it is very unsettling to read that "there is little teacher training for working in bilingual schools and bilingual classrooms. (This is exacerbated) by a "considerable international lack of bilingual teachers... (Among school administrators, educators and advisors alike), there is also a surprising ignorance about bilingual children and bilingual education." (p. 203, 204).

In support of the argument in favor of child literacy in the first and majority language and also educating school staff on bilingual/bicultural issues, it is ironic to note that generally, the sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity in a school setting focuses primarily on the ESL classroom. The point is that *non* ESL teachers too need to be concerned, for the benefit of all children.

We made the listing deadline for

the 1997 update of Hudson's Washington News Media and Hudson's Directory of International Newsletters!

You have written to us from

Cyprus, Germany, Kentucky, Mexico and New York.

Our special thanks to

- Margaret Crandall and Anna Whitcher Kutz at the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington D.C. for their article
- and those parents who have written to us, some from far away

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In our next issue

- FBPN's foreign-born family
- **The language of discipline:** Which language and culture does your child identify with?
- **Book review:** *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language* by Jerome Bruner, W. W. Norton & Co., 1983

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Your children's names and age:

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E-mail:

Are you interested in
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- **which country(ies)?**

Your child's dominant culture(s):

Language(s) spoken in the home:

How did you hear about FBPN?
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___ friend
___ other (please specify)

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__ intercultural parenting strategies that work for you
__ your indicators of success
__ practical considerations for classroom teachers
__ other

The
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Alice T. Rasmussen, founder and editor

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EDITOR

The future is now!

And the future status of language competencies, especially of the less commonly spoken languages may depend on what we decide today as parents.

I have observed that for some of us, FBPN's mission takes on a personal meaning and urgency, indeed, well *before* children come along. Our very own Isabelle Talpain Long is a second generation French-born member and *not yet* parent. To her, being informed, thus prepared, seems as significant as actually living the bilingual/intercultural parenting experience. Our readers should enjoy the special flavor of Isabelle's article on p. 5.

Her story reminds me of the necessity for additional empirical research centered on families. In a 1990 paper (which was reviewed in our March and May 1996 issues), K. Hakuta remarked: "It would be useful to have vivid documentation of the status of languages and processes by which they disappear from the lives of the families and communities as well as of programs that successfully develop these resources." There is for sure a number of interconnected issues that influence the process of language/culture preservation and our children's identity.

For this month, we selected discipline as a parenting topic. "The language of discipline" (on p. 3) presents a particular appreciation of language and culture as shared by some parents, including myself. Presuming that to discipline is to teach, our tip of the month on p. 7 should help your child learn the virtue of patience in your native tongue or second language.

Patience is indeed what I shall ask of our readers. With a finger laceration resulting in last minute surgery four days before leaving for Myanmar, and since then, trips to Singapore for therapy, I realized only recently that my review notes of J. Bruner's book (Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language, 1983) might still be stranded over the Pacific Ocean. Which means that the review of his book could not be included in the present issue. Instead, I invite you to check out "Understanding Bilingual/Bicultural Young Children" by L. Diaz Soto (see p. 6). Even as it confirms what we already know with some measure of certainty, the article also alerts teachers and parents to a number of common misperceptions about young children' abilities in second language learning.

Editor

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5 **FBPN's family feature**: Isabelle Talpain Long looks back on her experience as an intercultural child

6 **Research revisited:** "Undertanding Bilingual/Bicultural Young Children", an article by L. Diaz Soto (1991)

7 Tips for busy, working parents

8 For parents in New York City

Our mission

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What's new?

Stateside

- Isabelle Talpain Long represented our network at the annual panel on raising bilingually competent children at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington, Virginia on October 30th, 1996.

Meanwhile,

- Following one PTA executive committee meeting in November, another one brought together the director of the International School of Yangon in Myanmar (or ISY), the PTA president, one American Kindergarten teacher and 5 parents and speakers of other languages (SOL).

With the dynamic school director and PTA executive, the newly created PTA is taking up the task of involving more SOL parents in both formal and informal ways while optimizing the school's available resources.

ISY families are typically international and intercultural* families who are local Burmese and expatriate residents.

* International families typically move frequently. While they may move just as frequently, intercultural families also have needs and resources that are characteristic of children born of parents who are native of different cultures.

Did you know that...

In 1995, the 15 members of the European Union adopted a resolution in favor of multilingualism. However, there exists some disagreement as to how to go about promoting linguistic diversity.

A first international conference will evaluate the state of linguistic diversity in the Union as its objective. It will bring together members of the European Council on Languages and will be held in France in July 1997.

From *Le Monde de l'Education*, October 1996, p. 56

Leave your caring touch on St Valentine's day!

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What is your message?

The Language of Discipline

In the strict sense of teaching, discipline is a term that is loaded with cultural meaning. For some of our parents, the act of disciplining engages a choice of linguistic interaction as well, one which in my mind raises one other important question: What cultural message are we sending our child? As always, your reactions to the present article are welcome and will be shared with our readers (unless otherwise requested).

For a number of you, the language of discipline is *not* the native tongue. It is English. When I expressed my surprise initially, this is how it was explained to me.

At the initial injunction, orders in English such as STOP and PLEASE come out more naturally. As these parents say it, the words are forceful, direct and grab their child's attention instantly. But then, the native tongue (or target language to be maintained) is used just as naturally when more involved explanation is deemed necessary. (It is interesting to note that the target language in question is Italian, an affective and "wordy" language, I am told. Not surprisingly perhaps, like Italian, Spanish may use a lot more words than English to say the same thing.)

Let me note at this time that, unlike those parents' experience, the first admonition to my children has always been in French (indeed, whether I am disciplining them or not). I will however remark that children are likely to react to English first in situations where English is both their language of instruction and the mainstream language.

Besides the linguistic aspect of disciplining, the culture sensitive message my child is hearing is just as significant to me. That is mainly because "strictly speaking, discipline means to teach, not to punish. But somewhere along the line, parents, teachers and others in authority started equating discipline with punishment. This equation is easily one of the most pervasive and damaging stereotypes concerning child management in our culture." (F. Jones, Education Digest, Nov. 1996, p. 42) So, which cultural message I intend *and* successfully convey is to me the real question. The question could be a particularly pertinent one, I believe, in the case of intercultural child-rearing and intercultural adoption.*

I see in this encounter of languages and cultures a number of input and output variables.

On the **input** side,

- one may be the **parent's personality**. Are you a "disciplinarian"? I can see how some parents may need the extra "push" of a language they perceive as having in effect more "punch". The ability to remain consistent also helps.

- the second variable is the **situation** that

either prompted or resulted in the act of disciplining.

From a problem-solving, thus teaching perspective, some situations clearly suggest more "ways out" or choices of action for the child than others. How that type of situation is successfully managed by parent and child in the target language may depend on the parent's ability to recognize in it an opportunity for communication.

Personally, I have always given my daughters the choice between two courses of action (but not more than two for beyond that, a young child has difficulty making discrete decisions). I have also observed that, in doing that, we allow children some measure of autonomy and believe me, they catch on very fast and eventually, will be able to identify possible alternatives without your help!

- The third variable may be the **parent's perception of his or her own competence** in the non-native language (say, English). This in turn can affect that parent's self-esteem vis a vis a child whose English fluency enables him/her to negotiate solutions more deftly than the parent can.

On the **output** side, the teaching interaction can engage culture learning and influence identity in some very meaningful ways, given the variables considered earlier.

For example, to me, discipline means self-discipline with its clear rules of tidiness, propriety and deference to elders. I also equate it with individual autonomy, in particular getting the information one needs to be able to function. If this sounds like native Asian culture seasoned with a western flavor, well, it is. Personally, I have strived to be culturally sensitive and in my experience, the act of disciplining offers an appropriate opportunity for negotiating options towards a healthy sense of biculturalism.... all of this in my target language (which is French). And I have done this by contrasting various cultural practices.

Which language comes first?

English-first and bilingual Hispanics are likely to prefer media types in English language (i.e. television, radio, magazine and newspaper in order of preference). For print media, "the preferred language for reading is the one learned first, and bilingual Hispanics prefer English."

From *American Demographics*, Oct. 95, p. 21
Editor's note: Is this an identified pattern for languages **other** than Spanish?

I have also found that by focusing on what *other* cultures do reduces the tension of the moment. Here too, personality matters as some children may be more receptive to the diversion than others. How the parent puts it is also just as important. To the younger child whose interest is awakened, cultural alternatives can (and should) be presented simply in terms he or she is able to comprehend. With an older child, the information can be researched with the parent's guidance (that is, when the situation is back to normal).

At the risk of repeating myself, the hyphenated cultural identity has been my best functional guide (see our Jan/Feb. 1996 issue). It has driven our parent-child activities, helped in clarifying cultural role models or in identifying available behavior options, such as in a disciplining situation.

From my personal observations, bilingualism and biculturalism does not necessarily translate into effective cross-cultural competencies. As one author puts it, the successful negotiators of tomorrow are those who skilfully negotiate the dialogue between cultures (M. Push, 1975). And tomorrow is now. As we open the window of opportunity today, we might also want to include not only multilingual skills but also role models from as many diverse cultures as possible.

* FBPN would especially like to hear from parents of adopted children who are natives of cultures other than their own.

Reminder

Inquiries and mail sent to Box B, APO AP 96546 should be addressed to Alice Rasmussen, not FBPN. We apologize to those readers and members whose mail was returned by the APO mailroom. For faster processing of your inquiry, please contact Isabelle Talpain Long by phoning, postal mail or e-mail (see p. 2).

Bridging the generations

by Isabelle Talpain Long

Isabelle was inspired to write her article this past summer after attending FBPN's first year picnic celebration.

I recently attended a Foreign Born Parent Network (FBPN) gathering, and after talking to several parents, I was struck by the lack of confidence many expressed in bringing up their children in their native language. I realized that one of the main problems for these parents is that they lack encouragement from the outside that they are doing the right thing.

I am Franco-American, married to an American, and have been living in the United States for over ten years. My husband and I do not yet have children and the reader might wonder why I could be interested in FBPN and why I can even pretend to provide a sliver of reassurance. What attracts me to FBPN, and why I think I might be able to shed a little light, is that I am the product of two different cultures and a partner in an intercultural marriage myself. My father is French, my mother American, and I grew up in France, surrounded by many families like ours. So this article is simply a testimony, which I hope will be useful.

When I was born, my mother only know a few words of French, and to perfect her second language, she spoke to me in French (as she later told me, at the time there were many theories that discouraged raising children in two languages for fear of confusing them and hindering their development). French is my first language. My parents speak a mix of French and English regularly, probably a 50/50 ratio. So, in a sense, I have always been exposed to both languages. As I grew older, my mother realized that she was missing a great opportunity to transmit her cultural identity and native language. I was four or five years old when she decided to teach me the latter. She tried different approaches, pretty much in vain.

At first, she sat with me and "attempted" to teach me some very basic vocabulary and sentences such as "This is a dog", "May I have the salt?", etc... I think she was quite stunned by my reaction: I literally froze and refused to hear a thing about it! I remember throwing temper tantrums and even throwing objects at her. But she did not give up. Realizing she was getting nowhere, Mom thought that if I were with other children my age, learning English might become a fun experience. So she contacted a few parents in our neighborhood and volunteered to teach English for an hour or so once a week. I must have been five or six. I can't say that I enjoyed these lessons either, but because I was with other children, I mostly kept my tantrums to myself. When I turned seven, we moved to the suburbs of Paris, in an American-like development where Mom befriended several American women, also married to Frenchmen.

She was no longer alone and her resolve grew stronger. She kept on with her weekly classes. I can remember clearly a Christmas event for which we had learned the lyrics to several Christmas carols. Mom was sitting at the piano, all of her students dressed up around her, and we performed for the group of parents. It was a lot of fun. These classes went on until I entered 6th grade. In France, every child must take a foreign language in sixth grade. Mom MADE ME take English (secretly, I really wanted to take German!)

I don't think I was aware of it at the time, but Mom's relentless efforts had not been totally in vain. I aced 6th grade English. Then came THE surprise: At the end of 6th grade, she believed I had learned enough English basics and presented me with a plane ticket destination USA. I spent six weeks with her family where NO ONE SPOKE A WORD OF FRENCH. After that "sink or swim" experience, I would say that at least 50% of my conversations with Mom were in English, well, sometimes Frenglish. Without her dedication over the years, I would not have the bilingual abilities I have today.

Her approach worked for my sister as well. However, it is not the only one and is by no means the "right" one for every family. At the FBPN gathering, I heard several parents asking if they were using the right approach, if they were on the right track, or if something was wrong with what they were doing because their child did not seem to pick up the language or answered in English. I don't think there is a right or a wrong approach or a "better" way. Each child is different and learns differently. But I think the key is to keep trying, not to give up and have confidence that your efforts will be rewarded down the road. Without being aware of it, your child will pick up and assimilate many things, both with the language and with aspects of your home culture.

As I was reading the review for Breaking the Language Barrier by H. Douglas Brown in the July/Aug. 1996 issue of FBPN's newsletter, it occurred to me that part of the reason Mom's efforts succeeded in the long run also might be because I was exposed to English early on in life and really learned it without intellectualizing, and without thinking about whether I was making a fool of myself as I was trying to communicate with relatives.

I wanted to share this story, not to attempt to answer any questions, but rather to say that it is possible to teach your child your mother tongue, even when the child or the environment may seem to place many obstacles in your path. Mom was so successful (and Dad fully supported her efforts) that both my sister and I are now living and working in the United States. And if that is any indication at all, my present work at the National Foreign Language Center of John Hopkins University in Washington D.C is to promote foreign language learning. Needless to say that when my husband and I have children, I will follow in Mom's footsteps. Thanks Mom!

Research revisited

Bilingual Early Childhood Education

"Understanding Bilingual/Bicultural Young Children" by Lourdes Diaz Soto, *Young Children*, January 1991, p. 30-36.

The twin concern of the article is early childhood education and second language learning. The subjects are younng learners of English who are also speakers of other languages or SOL (Casanova, 1990). The article's main argument is discussed below. We especially invite the reactions of parents and teachers of young SOL learners for whom the language of instruction is ***other*** *than their native tongue.*

From the point of view of research and practice, the author's argument is that additive bilingualism nurtures a healthy sense of cultural diversity whereas substractive bilingualism neither promotes the latter nor does it benefit the SOL learner's acquisition of a second language. Indeed, L. D. Soto's interest is in adding a second language not in substituting the child's native language. Unfortunately, as she also points out, most program philosophies and instructional practices reflect deficit philosophies, which the research does not appear to support.

> "It is not true that young children learn a new language more quickly and easily than adults."
>
> "Teachers of young children need to be cognizant of variabilities (in second language acquisition) by becoming keen observers of existing knowledge and abilities (Genishi, 1989)"
>
> L. Diaz Soto, p. 32

Cummins (1977, 1979, 1984, 1985) and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) suggest that "optimal threshold levels of native language proficiency are needed by young language minority learners (as contrasted with dominant language speakers) in order to reap the benefits of becoming bilingual" (p. 32). In second language acquisition, we are reminded, a number of common misperceptions need to be cleared just as we need to know and practice more of what is appropriate in promoting early childhood bilingualism.

There exist three common *mis*perceptions:

1. The process of learning a second language is "painless" . The research suggests otherwise (Hakuta, 1986). That is, the child learns a second language by trial and error (McLaughlin, 1984), thus making a teacher's sensitivity and explicit instructions necessary. Although it may be more painful than we think it is, the author notes that early, simultaneous bilingualism does no harm to the child's language development.

2. Age is a handicap for adult or adolescent learners. That, again, is not supported by the research (Hakuta, 1986; Krashen, Long and Scarcella, 1979). However, D. Soto is careful to note that the young SOL learner who is exposed to a second language often enough is more likely to become a proficient bilingual.

3. All children learn a second language in the same way. In fact, they don't as numerous variables exist that affect the social, cognitive and linguistic processes involved in language learning (W. Fillmore, 1976, 1985, 1986). Other than individual characteristics, "situations, interactions and input" come into play and interact among one another.

From our network's point of view, the author's recommendations were the most telling of what to do and not to do both in the classroom and at home.

- "Informal observations and teacher documentation" are important in assessing progress. To dismiss young learners' abilities in their native language may not be developmentally appropriate.
- Rigid instruction in the second language

Your success is *our* story!

"My children go to English-speaking preschools. Ian, my 3 year old soaks in English like a sponge. English has taken over where Spanish used to be dominant."

Maria del Carmen Rowley (Honduras)

"I am interested in networking with other families trying to rear French-speaking children in New York; in getting information on French schools in New York."

Heather Henderson is American born and has been interested in starting a local chapter in her area

"I am the owner of a language school... I realized very quickly the tremendous need to educate parents and schools regarding the importance of teaching children at a young age."

Nicole Provencher (United States)

Continued from p. 6

harms the learning process. Focus instead on activities, communication through opportunities for conversation, informal play.

- If for instance, the learner's native culture favors "group speaking activities" (Phillips, 1972) or "narrative patterns" (Jordan, 1981), then incorporate such activity patterns into classroom practice.

The article presents three instructional models for preschools and early elementary school learners from the least to the most attitudinally beneficial (Ovando & Collier, 1985):

1. The **transitional** approach seeks to mainstream SOL speakers into regular English classes using the native language as the initial medium

2. **Maintenance/developmental** programs focus on native language skills and English mastery (the latter with ESL instruction)

3. The **two way bilingual** approach emerges as the most effective as it favors culturally sensitive interaction among children of diverse linguistic backgrounds (Collier, 1989).

Combining features from the above three models, Krashen and Biber (1988) recommend:

- literacy in the native language;
- "comprehensible input in English" but without "concurrent translation" (p. 34);
- a progressive approach "from native language instruction to initial second language learning, to a stage of enrichment and eventually a return to the native language instruction via the incorporation of literature and social studies" (p. 30) in order to promote positive attitudes towards diverse languages and cultures.

In all, the practical attitude for SOL parents and teachers to adopt might be to maintain an "additive philosophy" as they add to each other's knowledge base while recognizing that the bilingual child is blessed with abilities in more than one native language.

Get help INSTANTLY!

- Through the foreign-born family interview, we address your questions **on the spot** and share our suggestions.
- Need practical pointers? Those are featured in the section below as tips for busy, working parents.

Share your tips with busy, working parents

As parents, we know that kids must not be bribed. But what if they still won't do what we expect of them? Try this tip. It has worked for me in two specific ways.

First, it is an opportunity for parent and child to communicate in the target/native language. Second, it teaches children about putting together events in a logical, matter-of-fact sequence and, along with that, the virtue of patience.

Say, your child won't clean up the room. He/she would rather play with friends. Present it so that your child knows that cleaning up comes **first (1)** and play comes **next (2)**. (In French, I use "avant/après"). Refrain from saying: **"If** you clean up, then ...." Why? Because (1) is presented as a condition before (2) actually happens rather than one event in an expected sequence of events.

As announced in an earlier issue...

The exciting news is that early this year, FBPN 's newsletter will be available in abstract form in the ERIC database (Educational Resource Information Center) on Languages and Linguistics via the Internet (http://ericir.syr.edu)

Our special thanks to

Isabelle Talpain Long for her testimonial as a second generation FBPN member

Thank you for writing to us from

Silver Spring, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Singapore and Washington D.C.

For parents in New York City

As far as we know (New York Times, 1994), La Croisette offers an after school French program at 22, East 95th Street in Manhattan. If interested, contact the director and let her know about our network of parents.

Please advise FBPN editor if you should be successful in obtaining additional information and share with us other references.

In the next issue

- FBPN's foreign-born family
- **International Day or A Celebration of Diversity:** Harmony or conflict? One family's perspective
- **Review:** On the "Inheritability of Identity: Children's Understanding of the Cultural Biology of Race" by Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, *Child Development*, Oct. 95

Please specify your choice of language edition, complete form and mail to FBPN. Thank you.

__ English __ French __ Spanish

__ Payment enclosed __ Bill me/us later

Name

Current mailing address:

Your children's names and age:

Home phone:
Work phone:
Fax:
E-mail:

Are you interested in
- hosting opportunities: ___ YES ___ NO
- study abroad: ___ YES ___ NO?
- which country(ies)?

Your child's dominant culture(s):

Language(s) spoken in the home:

How did you hear about FBPN?
___ foreign language conference/PMI
___ friend
___ other (please specify)

To which friend can we mail a sample issue ?

Please check items you would like us to contact you about.
__ your country's child-rearing/parenting practices
__ writing an article of interest to you and our readers
__ intercultural parenting strategies that work for you
__ your indicators of success
__ practical considerations for classroom teachers
__ other

The
FOREIGN-BORN
Parent
NETWORK™
March/April 1997
Issue No. 10

An interactive and multicultural forum
for parent-citizens and partners in education

Alice T. Rasmussen, founder and editor
A bilingual publication in English and Spanish

Alice T. Rasmussen, Box B, APO AP 96546 USA ISSN 1085-3596

EDITOR

*Inter*cultural has many faces...

*Inter*culturalism implies the meeting of diverse cultures. It also recognizes one's ability to deal with the many challenges and opportunities therefrom. At its most obvious, we are talking about families where the partners are from different cultures. Less obvious are those situations where the monolingual/monocultural family "engineers" (to borrow a term from C. Baker) early childhood immersion in a language other than their home language or those *in*-migrant families who, even as they feel accepted in the host-country have an uprooting story to tell. In between those, come yet other variations, not the least of which are families who adopt second or third culture children and those others for whom the marriage of races creates more discrete, yet sometimes blurred options.

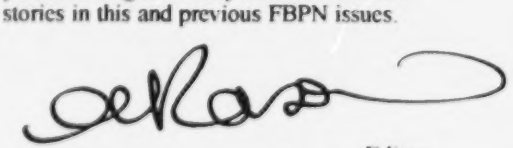
We may not have covered every situation. While they are not mutually exclusive, each situation is however characterized by some degree of ambivalence in the pursuit of intellectual satisfaction, emotional identity and psychological security.

Our network is proud and fortunate to have all of those intercultural faces represented among our membership. Our members' interests are many and we have, with varying degrees of emphasis, examined four significant components of the complex hybrid of identity. Those are: nationality, language, race and culture (or NALARC for short).

Identity is an intimately personal process. As a parent, I have always felt that I can guide the process to some extent, though ultimately, my children will, I believe, carve a comfortable identity 'niche' for themselves. But the point that is worth making is that identity and its attendant issues should be raised, discussed in the open so as to ease the pangs of insecurity as our youngsters mature.

In that respect, Hirschfeld's article is a fascinating piece of research (see p. 6). It suggests to me a number of things we could do as parents.

Along with family and community, the school is a powerful transmitter of identity values. One of our parents, Giuliana Allen, speaks up on culture and schooling and what that relationship has meant for her (on p. 5). Our daughters' school celebrated International Day last December. For our family, it was less of a celebration as it turned out (see p. 3). My thought is that teaching and counselling professionals will share with us their personal insights as they read our families' stories in this and previous FBPN issues.



Editor

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Our mission

We are an interactive peer resource, advocate and multilingual support network for foreign-born and *all* parents whose lives are touched by the interaction between the home- and host-country cultures. We engage parents in a dialogue on how that cultural interaction affects parental involvement in bilingual child-rearing, intercultural parenting, the workplace, school and community. All rights reserved worldwide.

Who we are

FBPN is an upbeat, multilingual publication based on its founder's experience as a spouse in an intercultural marriage and a foreign-born parent whose personal mission has been to preserve the home culture while thriving in the host-culture and maintaining a global outlook.

FBPN (ISSN 1085-3596) is a bimonthly, multilingual publication of BOND (Business, Organization and Network Development), a global human resources consulting and training business.

What we can do for you

We offer
- bilingual and intercultural parenting workshops
- consulting in multicultural community and organization development, including global human resources and leadership development, work-family and strategic diversity planning
- workshops on marketing across cultures
- targeted advertising space.

How to reach us

Alice T. Rasmussen
Box B, APO AP 96546 USA

Membership

In the U.S:

$35.00	individuals and families
$50.00	public, government and state institutions, non-profit organizations
$65.00	commercial, international, for-profit institutions and universities

International:

$52.50	individuals, families
$75.00	non-profit, public and state institutions
$97.50	commercial, international, for-profit

Benefits include:
- a yearly subscription to our newsletter (six issues)
- access to immersion programs abroad
- a 10% discount on multiple orders.

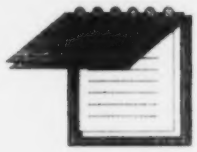
Back issues are available at $5.00 per issue

Payment

Please mail check in US$ payable to *The Foreign-Born Parent Network* with the form on p. 8 to:

Alice Rasmussen (not FBPN)
Box B
APO AP 96546

What's new?



- I was in Myanmar between 1983 and 1986 (the country was known then as Burma). Back then, a small group of us, Spanish-speakers started a "grupo hispánico". Ten years later, in 1996, this group is still around, although somewhat moribund. Being the only member of the original group, I have joined other die-hards to give the group a new lease on life. We are now in the process of giving it a formal name. The candidates are: "Grupo Quijote", "Asociación Cultural de la Lengua Española de Myanmar" (ACLEM). Do you have any thoughts on this?

- In February, a small group of us parents got together over lunch. We were from Honduras, Vietnamese-born from Laos and Vietnam, Thai, French and Burmese. We reminisced about our past schooling experience, our family ways. We talked about the languages we want our youngsters to grow up speaking. And we discussed the citizenship rights of our offspring. We have also begun to share an interest in starting what could appear to be a local network of FBPN. But the important thing was that we got together and spoke about what is closest to our heart, i.e. our children. Have you? Write to Alice for more information on starting your own local network of members.

- While we will continue to offer the English and Spanish language editions of FBPN, we have chosen to cease the French language edition for practical reasons.

What is of concern to you?
What troubles you?
What tickles you?
What makes you proud?

The newsletter is yours!
Our readers also tell us they particularly enjoy FBPN's family feature which typically is an article written by a parent.

Caring friends tell their good friends who tell their friends..

Send for a gift membership to FBPN today and we will mail it to your friend or relative!

Celebrate bilingualism and biculturalism and bridge the generations!

For both U.S. and international membership, write to Alice Thoannès Rasmussen, Box B, APO AP 96546

International Day at school

Which country flag will your child parade under?

Our family wrestled with that question in anticipation of International Day, the annual celebration of diversity at the International School of Yangon. And the best we could come up with was... Read on and you shall find out more about our decision as a family and my personal recommendation for an observance of diversity.

International Day has become a school tradition in many parts of the world. And rightly so, perhaps, given the increasing diversity of the student population in the United States and in overseas schools as well. Yes, global trade makes for a smaller world, a more open-minded community, they say. Or is it so?

Businesses and governments may make a big fuss about economic *inter*dependence, but when it boils down to a straight question of identity, interdependence can give way to fierce *in*dependence. Indeed, identity is really not that simple a question when an individual can potentially claim loyalty to more than one nation, one ethnic group. *And*, when he or she is put in a situation where the need to justify one's identity in the eyes of others can be the source of psychological stress. This was made none too obvious for our intercultural family last year as we prepared for International Day.

The word from the school was to designate a country flag under which both our girls were to parade. " Of course, it will be American", my husband says. "Wait a minute", I blurted out, "but our girls are half Asian by blood, Vietnamese to be exact. And they also hold a French passport and both speak, read and write French." We did not celebrate diversity. Indeed, diversity was dividing us.

Not surprisingly perhaps, my husband and I knew exactly who *we* are or wanted to be. For him, American it had to be if only because he represents the United States as a member of its embassy in Yangon, Myanmar. As for me, I insisted upon the fact that my own identity could not boil down to the colors of one flag. That part of it had to do with the two passports I hold, with the ethnic traits I inherited, with the Confucian-Asian culture my father worked so hard to preserve from one generation to the next and last but not least, with the many languages I grew up speaking. Whereas my husband and I seemed to stick each to our guns, our daughters had a lucid perception of where *they* stood vis a vis their parents.

To begin with, they were very much aware of the biological and language distinction between my husband and me. "I am American, but not all American," my 11 year old said. "Because Mom is not American." "And you don't speak French either," my 7 year old chimed in to her Dad." Mom does." (For our readers' knowledge, Anne knew then that she was going to transfer to the French school in

Yangon. the following semester.)

This is a case of "half full" or "half empty" glasses, if you will. Our daughters clearly saw themselves as half and half along the lines of race and language. But each half of their identity was full rather than empty. Each half is a whole parent, the American Dad one one side and on the other side, the non-American Mom. It was, by the way, quite telling that what or who I was precisely was unimportant at the moment: I was simply *not* an American as opposed to Dad. And that was how they seemed to come to terms with the problem of defining me.

Did I say problem? How I thrive on confounding my interlocutors who would frequently ask: "But where do *you* come from?" I hail from many lands and if they would care to listen, I would usually thread them all into my life story. And I feel quite content being who I am, really. Hence, the problem of defining who I am is, funny enough, other people's problem rather than mine.

Having said that though, the burden is then on me to bring the identity dilemma to a close, and I did. This is how our family settled the question, although not entirely to my husband's satisfaction initially. I proposed that our family loyalties be split into two teams, the American with my husband and our oldest daughter while my seven year-old and I would represent the French connection. Was *I* happy with the final decision? Somewhat since the association my girls have always made between me and the French language found in that resolution its concrete form. Yet, I wasn't entirely satisfied either because I was made to *choose which* country I belong to, just as my daughters would have been made to choose which country they belong to. Is it a matter of fairness? No, I see it rather as a matter of personal conviction. Hence, to conclude, this is what I propose for the next celebration of diversity at ISY.

• First of all, rather than asking families to name the country or countries they would parade under, identify the various family profiles first by means of the following categories:

- one culture, one language spoken in the home?
- two cultures, one language in the home?
- two cultures, two languages in the home?
- more than two cultures and two languages in the home?

• Confusing it it? But that is precisely the point. When presented in these terms, recaltcitrant individuals will get the message that things are not so clearcut after all. In themselves, these categories raise the level of awareness and are thus more conducive to an open discussion of the identity issue, especially for those families with, should I say, split loyalties.

• Next, organizers might wish to propose not just individual countries as exhibit rooms, but also "mixed cultures" as rooms to placate those die-hards who feel their identity is more akin to a "mixed salad".

I can only imagine how "special" those mixed culture/mixed blood youngsters would feel, how "proud" they would be because they can claim not just one heritage but more than one. And even if they should not feel special and proud, even if they should feel reluctant about participating, I would contend that the level of awareness of our youngsters too would have been raised.

My 11 year old recently shared with me that she sees herself as a "mixed blood" child (*métis* in French, and the word has no exact equivalent in English). Some time later, Caroline put her face close to her sister's and beamed out: "See, my features are more Asian than Anne's. *She* hardly looks Asian at all."

My thought then and now is that to spark a *dialogue* rather than a confrontation about diversity, we perhaps ought to give equal emphasis to the "grey zone". Such a grey zone is not made up of *one-type* but *cross-type* categories that characteristically define the bridge generation of mixed culture and mixed blood children.

Growing up in a more integrated society...

" The next baby boom will be the first generation to seriously question all traditional racial categories. The reason is that many of today's children and teens are of mixed races." (p.25)..." More than three-fourths of baby boomers are white, compared with just two-thirds of the next baby boom." (p. 31)

From *American Demographics*, Oct. 95

Culture and schooling

by Giuliana Allen

Giuliana Allen is a mother of two and married to an American. She shares with us her conviction about school as a medium of value transmission. She is committed to a goal she has set for her children and the following article tells us how she continues to engineer the language immersion experience for the entire family.

I was born and reared in Italy and have been married since 1985. I hold an American passport since 1986. My husband is in the Army and he is fluent in Italian. We have a four year old daughter and a two year old son. My children are bilingual so far although my daughter is more fluent than my son.

My most precious goal is that my children be at the same time true Americans and true Italians. Even though I adopted the American citizenship, I still value my Italian heritage.But, to me, it is not enough to speak a culture's language. One also needs the schooling experience. That being my strongest conviction, I have attempted to prepare my children so that eventually, they will be able to attend high school in Italy.

In that sense, my undergraduate years at the University of Maryland have also meant a lot to me. Yes, my English has greatly improved (I was an English major) but what I value most was the opportunity I had to understand American culture better. And I was able to do that through literature readings, American history and other standard subjects. The immersion experience I had as an adopted American and as an adult inspired me to engineer the Italian immersion experience for my children. I am now sharing with you what I have been doing so far.

• Each year I spend two months in my home town where I enroll my children in the ASILO kindergarten program from 9:00 AM to 4:00PM. That is supplemented by our extended "family immersion program" with aunts and cousins. As Italians, we put great emphasis on family values and I want my children to experience that family bonding too.

• Each year, my own parents visit us for three months. And I encourage everyone in my family to come and visit.

• In my home, the rule is: "Qui si parla Italiano". I am fortunate that my husband speaks Italian too but that is the toughest rule to follow even for me because it is easier to slip back into English.

• We have an Italian and English language library. Since my children were infants, we read each book twice, the first time in the book's printed language and the second time in the "second" language.

• I also network with other foreign-born wives with children older than mine. My feeling is that our generation of children will not reject their parents' native background for fear of being different and out of a desire to fit in. America has waken up to the issue, I think.

• I am prepared to make adjustments along the way. When my children begin formal schooling, I may not be able to fit in trips to Italy. But one thing I can do is enroll them in Italian classes after school hours or if there should be a need for it, teach it myself. And I am prepared to do that too.

My husband has been fully supportive of my efforts and I feel fortunate that he can provide for us so that I have been able to stay home and care for the children. But I also gave up my ambition of a professional career as I know that my children's education will benefit from the ongoing bilingual and bicultural immersion.

What is the Singaporean government policy regarding Mandarin Chinese?

Since 1979, Singapore has launched its annual "Speak Mandarin" campaign with a call to English-speaking citizens to learn the language as a tool to promote business with China's booming economy... English is the language of instruction in schools and the predominant medium of businesss transactions here, and there is much to lose if we do not provide a conducive environment for our children to use Mandarin", warned Tony Tan Keng Yam, the Deputy Prime Minister.

Bangkok Post, Sept. 23, 1996

Article review (Part I)

The Inheritability of Identity: Children's Understanding of the Cultural Biology of Race

by Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, University of Michigan, *Child Development*, October 1995, 66, p. 1418-1437.

I found Hirschfeld's article simply fascinating and packed with information. To do justice to the research to date on identity assignment by young children, our review presents current findings in two parts. ***Part I*** *examines prevailing representations of race and their implications, particularly in North American culture.* ***Part II*** *will continue in FBPN's next issue with Hirschfeld's discussion of four particular studies he conducted on the topic. I am particularly interested in the reactions of those members who are not North American. Are they aware of the "one-drop rule"? What is its meaning or what other theories about race prevail in their native culture?*

> " Virtually, no work speaks to children's reasoning (about race in ambiguous cases), such as those presented by mixed-race children. "
>
> Hirschfeld, p. 1421

Research on children's understanding of race as a social category of power and status goes back as early as the 1940s (Clark & Clark, 1947; Jordon, 1968; Katz, 1982; Aboud, 1988; Fredrickson, 1988). More recent work indicates that even children demonstrate an adult-like understanding of the biological (as contrasted with social) properties that explain the resemblance between parents and their offspring (Springer & Keil, 1989, 1991; Gelman & Wellman, 1991; Solomon, Johnson, Zaitchik, & Carey, in press when Hirschfeld's article went into print; Springer, 1992; Carey & Spelke, 1994; Hirschfeld, 1994a). What precisely governs children's understanding of family resemblance remains however a matter of interpretation.

The prevailing assumptions attribute family likeness to common sense, genealogical and social identity relationships. Hirschfeld's various studies demonstrate his cumulative findings that children are able to make the distinction between biological and social interpretations of race (1986, 1989, 1994b, 1994c).

The notion of race invokes a number of expectations about the inheritability of:

- visible features, e.g. hair color, skin color and other physical characteristics). And,
- nonobvious properties that typically distinguish one race from another, otherwise known as the *essence* of a race.

In North American ideology, the term essence is synonym with the hard-to-measure yet innate and symbolic notion of blood. As understood in the "one-drop rule", the identity of children of mixed-race parents is presumed to be that of the minority parent. To quote Hirschfeld directly, "a person is black if he or she has a *traceable* amount of black ancestry (Davis, 1991)" (p. 1419).

The problem is that a trace of blood (so to speak) is in itself virtually unmeasurable and as conventionally known, the rule smacks of racial prejudices, at least in North America (p. 1421). What I found significant about it, however, is that:

- One, "what a traceable amount is varies by culture, historical epoch, and plausibly age", not to mention by state (Wright, 1994). And,
- two, the "one-drop rule" is perceived by many Blacks as symbolic of black heritage (Davis, 1991; Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992). Moreoever,
- by and of itself, the rule precludes the existence of the notion of "mixed-blood".

As reviewed by Davis (1991), there is no North American equivalent to the concept of *coloured*, *mulatto*, *mestizo* or *métis* that exist in other racial classification systems. My own knowledge of the current census debate over the use of race-based categories points indeed to a particularly incoherent classification structure.*

* For additional reference, our readers can check out the following articles, book titles and movie: How to Record Race, *American Demographics*, May 1996; Blood Brothers, *The Brookings Review*, Summer 1995; A Distorted Image of Minorities, *Washington Post*, Oct. 8, 1995; Not-So Black and White: The Two Americas Are Actually Converging, *Washington Post*, Oct. 15, 1995; An Act of Hope and A Last Resort, both on interracial adoption, *Washington Post*, June 30, 1996. The two book titles are: The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother by J. McBride, Riverhead Books and Divided to the Vein: A Journey into Race and Family by S. Minerbrook, Harcourt Brace, both of which were reviewed in the *Washington Post* of Jan. 14, 1996. The video cassette's title is: Doubles by Regge Life. It is about the identity perception of mixed-race Japanese and Black American born during WWII.

Your success is *our* story!

"We live in Singapore and have a four year old boy named Caio... One of the issues we are particularly interested in is the problem of getting our child to speak Portuguese, the language that both his parents use daily but in which he only demonstrates passive competence. "

Kees and Véra Davison

" We wholeheartedly support your efforts in promoting early bilingualism and you're doing a wonderful job with your newsletter and network."

Nancy Rhodes, Co-Director, Foreign Language Education, Center for Applied Linguistics

"My five year-old speaks German and has started asking about German sounds. Is it too early to introduce them?"

Elja Leipe

Continued from p. 6

For the Census Bureau, "the two biggest issues under consideration (are) the usefulness of a multiracial category and whether race and ethnicity* should be asked in a combined question." In fact, the real debate is over "when and why people think of themselves as mixed-race." (*American Demographics*, May 96, p. 39). And there is no simple answer to this question.

However, it is clear that for as long as one assumes the existence of a mixed-race category, the "one-drop rule" would appear to be downright irrelevant since it assigns a mixed-race child to one *or* the other parent. Furthermore, to link racial category membership to the subordinate or minority parent (Harris, 1964; Fredrickson, 1988; Wright, 1994) would make very little sense in *non*-North American systems of racial thought that attach a sociocultural meaning to racial identity. Consider, for example, that "in ... South Africa, Cuba, and Brazil, a person's racial status can change during one's lifetime" and "members of the same immediate family may be designated as belonging to different races depending on their socio-economic status." (p. 1420).

It is evident that the environment plays a major rule in the process of self-identification. Hirschfeld's study has contributed to my own understanding of North-American society and I hope that Part I of the review has prodded readers' curiosity about their native culture or others with which they have become familiar as a result of extensive exposure. We look forward to printing your comments along with Part II in the next FBPN issue.

* A recognized definition of the term (D. S. Hoopers and M. S. Pusch) identifies an ethnic group of people by its race, nation of origin and cultural characteristics. To quote these authors directly, "ethnic group membership is normally determined by birth. Most commonly, ethnic groups are seen as interdependent sub-units of larger cultural or political entities. The term "ethnic group" is often applied to groups which have a minority status in the larger society." (Source: Multicultural education, M. D. Pusch, ed., Intercultural Press, 1979, p. 3)

Get help INSTANTLY!

- Through the foreign-born family interview, we address your questions **on the spot** and share our suggestions.
- Need practical pointers? Those are featured in the section below as tips for busy, working parents.

Share your tips with busy, working parents

When my girls were much younger, reading together was one of our favorite passtimes. They have since become assiduous independent readers. One thing I used to do, as we were reading in French and leafing through the pages together, was to say: "Now, I turn the page." (Maintenant, je tourne la page). Soon, I would switch to: "Now, *you* turn the page." (*Toi*, tu tournes la page.) And gradually, they would anticipate doing that when we come to the end of a page, and of themselves they would turn it. At that moment, I would interrupt our reading and ask: "Now, what are *you* doing?" (Qu'est-ce que tu fais maintenant?). They would, as expected, answer: "Je tourne la page."

Try this tip in your home language and let us know the result.

It takes many hearts and wills to keep a network going, so our special thanks to

Isabelle Talpain Long for her benevolent dedication. From out here in South East Asia, and on behalf of our network of parents, I wish to thank her for putting up with the APO snail mail and the physical distance and, in spite of it all, for keeping the information organized as well as she did. We regret that she will no longer be able to act as a network liaison.

Giuliana Allen, our Italian-born parent whose boundless energy and creative support has been a constant source of inspiration.

and those of you who sent us more clippings from U.S. and foreign magazines on the subject of raising bilingual smart kids.

For parents and teachers

The Multilingual Translator: Words and Phrases in 15 Languages to Help You Communicate with Students of Diverse Backgrounds by Helen H. Moore. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1994. Tel.: (212) 343- 6196

Source: The Education Digest, Oct. 96, p. 78

In the next issue

- The Inheritability of Identity: Children's Understanding of the Cultural Biology of Race (Part II)
- Foreign language immersion abroad: For families and teaching professionals
- **Review:** Global Winners by Jan Drum, Steve Hughes, and George Otero, Intercultural Press, 1994

Please specify your choice of language edition, complete form and mail to FBPN. Thank you.

__ English __ Spanish

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Name

Current mailing address:

Your children's names and age:

Home phone:
Work phone:
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Are you interested in
- hosting opportunities: ___ YES ___ NO
- study abroad: ___ YES ___ NO?
- which country(ies)?

Culture(s) represented in your home:

Language(s) spoken in the home:

How did you hear about FBPN?
__ foreign language conference/PMI
__ friend
__ other (please specify)

To which friend can we mail a sample issue ?

Please check items you would like us to contact you about.

__ your country's child-rearing/parenting practices
__ writing an article of interest to you and our readers
__ intercultural parenting strategies that work for you
__ your indicators of success
__ practical considerations for classroom teachers
__ other

The
FOREIGN-BORN
Parent
NETWORK™
May/June 1997
Issue No. 11

An interactive and multicultural forum
for parent-citizens and partners in education

Alice T. Rasmussen, founder and editor

A bilingual and educational resource in languages and linguistics

Alice T. Rasmussen, Box B, APO AP 96546 USA ISSN 1085-3596

EDITOR

Changing old ways...

Change has been a constant for me as I watch my two elementary age daughters chart their course of growth, each at her own pace. Caroline and Anne are as different as night and day, and even though both are being raised bilingual, what I did and how I did it yesterday with Caroline, my 11 year old, did not always work in the same way today in the case of Anne who is seven.

Even as I stay informed, I too have learned by trial and error, from one child to the next, from one situation to another, as most parents do, I suppose. But, getting parents together has a way of lowering the collective learning curve: they network for new paths, hear differing views and examine changing realities as they apply to others or may yet apply to them. The account of our first local network event in Yangon is in lieu of the article on foreign language immersion abroad by Promotion Marketing International of Arlington, Virginia. So goes my topic planning and so much for change! That article will be run in due time (when snail mail permits in part) and we apologize for the necessary substitution. We hope that our special report on p. 3 will inspire you just the same.

As indicated in the previous issue, the U.S. Census Bureau too is wrestling with change. How best to identify a changing audience in order to keep track of their growing numbers has been at the heart of the census debate. The question of self-identification, we have read, raises more questions than it can answer. We have attempted to shed some light on the subject by looking at the racial thinking of young children and the research to date in Part I of L. Hirschfeld's article. My idea was for us, parents to reflect on a subject about which *our* parents most likely had little knowledge as parents, let alone us as youngsters. Part II of The Inheritability of Identity: Children's Understanding of the Cultural Biology of Race discusses the findings of four studies on the topic (see p. 5).

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2 What's new?

3 **FBPN special report from Yangon:** We are on to something good!

5 **Article Review:** "On the Inheritability of Identity: Children's Understanding of the Cultural Biology of Race" by L. A. Hirschfeld **(Part II)**

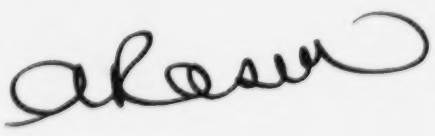
6 Global Winners by Jan Drum, Steve Hughes, and George Otero, Intercultural Press, 1994

7 Tips for busy, working parents

8 For parents and teachers

As the school year comes to a close, I also thought that parents and teachers could use some different titles and ideas to entertain youngsters this summer with an eye on quality time. Our review of Global Winners (1994) is intended with that purpose in mind. (p. 6)

To all we wish a bright summer of fun, togetherness and relaxation with your family!



Editor

Our mission

We are an interactive peer resource, advocate and multilingual support network for foreign-born and *all* parents whose lives are touched by the interaction of cultures. We engage parents in a dialogue on how that cultural interaction affects parental involvement in bilingual child-rearing, intercultural parenting, the workplace, school and community.
All rights reserved worldwide.

Who we are

FBPN is an upbeat, multilingual publication based on its founder's experience as a spouse in an intercultural marriage and a foreign-born parent whose personal mission has been to preserve the home culture while thriving in the host-culture and maintaining a global outlook.

FBPN (ISSN 1085-3596) is a bimonthly, multilingual publication of BOND (Business, Organization and Network Development), a global human resources consulting and training business.

What we can do for you

We offer
- bilingual and intercultural parenting workshops
- consulting in multicultural community and organization development, including global human resources and leadership development, work-family and strategic diversity planning
- workshops on marketing across cultures
- targeted advertising space.

How to reach us

Alice T. Rasmussen
Box B, APO AP 96546 USA

Membership

In the U.S:

$35.00	individuals and families
$50.00	public, government and state institutions, non-profit organizations
$65.00	commercial, international, for-profit institutions and universities

International:

$52.50	individuals, families
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$97.50	commercial, international, for-profit

Benefits include:
- a yearly subscription to our newsletter (six issues)
- access to immersion programs abroad
- a 10% discount on multiple orders.

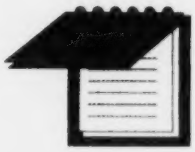
Back issues are available at $5.00 per issue

Payment

Please mail check in US$ payable to *The Foreign-Born Parent Network* **with the form on p. 8** to:

Alice Rasmussen (not FBPN)
Box B
APO AP 96546

What's new?



- Two events were scheduled for March-April of this year right before FBPN's editor left the United States to come to Myanmar. We very much regret that we were not able to participate in either event as scheduled.
  - The first would have been a presentation to World Bank families.
  - The second event would have involved our participation in a program on French language immersion abroad at l'Alliance française.

The interested organizations were advised and we hope to be able to reschedule those events when our editor returns to the U.S.

- The first introductory event of FBPN's local network in Yangon was held March 21st. Thirteen parents and school representatives attended. The meeting was successful in that

  - it drew meaningful reactions from participants;
  - at the close of the meeting, the group was able to draw up a list of proposed themes for future get-togethers;
  - a subsequent decision is expected regarding meeting venue, format and topics under selected themes.

See next page for more exciting details.

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein reflect the opinion of their authors. As a publication and interactive forum, FBPN welcomes the critical reactions of readers and, unless otherwise requested, readers' comments will be printed.

Just like any specialized publication, ours serves two purposes. The first is to provide targeted information. The second is to communicate as many original perspectives as possible as they relate to the various issues under discussion.

As a reflection of our human experiences, a content-specific issue is almost always discussed on the basis of daily occurrences. An author's keen reaction to those events does not constitute either an endorsement or a rejection of any particular institution or individual therein named.

What is of greater interest is the issue being discussed, the expression and variety of opinion and the author's attempt to address the issue itself by means of practical suggestions. The latter are indeed always welcome.

FBPN SPECIAL REPORT

from the local network in Yangon, Myanmar

We are on to something good!

What follows is an account that includes a selection of attendees' original comments condensed and edited for the purpose. In sharing this special report, our intention is to show that 1/ a discrete forum is a meaningful format for a candid parent-teacher exchange and 2/ that there clearly exists a gap between ***parents' wishes and the realities*** *(which was the theme for the day). It seems to me though that initially, some basic realities may have to be acknowledged before wishes could be realized.*

Our ethnically and culturally diverse group included spouses as well as teachers. Three other teachers were not able to attend. We hailed from far and near, from as far away as Honduras to Myanmar. Also represented were nationals of England, France, Holland, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, the United States and Vietnam.

The family had a visible profile given the nature of our concern. Indeed, we have been convinced that, **just like parent wishes, the home is where miraculous beginnings occur that benefit the child, especially when the preoccupation is language learning and the goal is to raise bilingual smart kids:**

- "Early experience counts the most (because) the brain reaches 80 percent of its full development by a child's first birthday." (*U.S. News*, March 10, 1997, p.10)
- And according to a Georgetown University linguist, "children are born with genetically programmed neurological and metabolic activity in the brain to help them learn language. This so-called "sensitive period" lasts from birth to about age 9 and is thought to peak at about age 5." (*Washington Post*, Sept. 10, 1995)

And so, the **first reality** may be that at least in the early years, home schooling may be the ideal for bilingual smart kids, at least during the preschool years. I heard this stated at the gathering under a different guise:

A British-born father and teacher/ preschool and Kindergarden owner (monolingual, intercultural household): "Yes, you (the non-English speaker) have an advantage that we don't have. We have always wanted our sons to speak the language of the natives, in all our years overseas. We did not have much success. And that's because they are so bombarded with English-speaking media that they tend to get lazy."

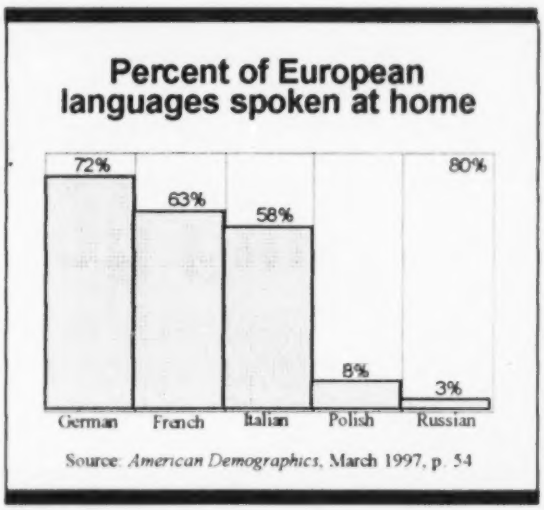
A Vietnamese-born father from Laos (intercultural household with more than two languages): "And the truth may be that parents are not just busy but also lazy." This father's candid remark was not meant to hurt or make other parents feel guilty, I believe. While we do empathize with busy parents in general, the kernel of truth here is that the least painful solution is to enroll a child in school as soon as age permits. At the same time though, the opportunity may have been neglected for linguistic development toward bilingual proficiency during the preschool years.

A Korean-born mother (bilingual, monocultural household): I am not sure I

can teach my child. I'd like for him to attend a Korean-speaking school the first seven years of his life and thereafter, an English-speaking school. At present, he is in an English language preschool. He hardly speaks English or Korean though. It has been mostly Burmese because his current caretaker is Burmese.

A Honduran mother (bilingual, intercultural household): It amazes me how fast children pick up any language. My own parents didn't speak a word of English when I was a child. I went to an English-language school, got no help from my parents with homework, and, by the way, didn't mind that either.

FBPN editor: *I* help my girls with homework in my natural language. Research on bilingualism shows that children are able to transfer concepts from one language to another (see our March 1996 and May 1996 issues).



The **second reality** is that to optimize linguistic development in early childhood, the parent's natural language is just as appropriate as English. Since 1994, FBPN has participated in the yearly panel on bilingual child-rearing at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center near Washington DC. One inevitable question from parents has been: Should we stick to a one-country language?- the general assumption being that it has less practical utility than other more widely spoken languages. Research provides the reassurance that native language proficiency lays the ground for successful bilingualism in later years (see our research review in the Jan./Feb. 1997 issue).

British-born parent and teacher: My experience has been that Singaporean-born parents won't speak up: it may be the language and the culture.

Korean-born parent: And many times too, parents' wishes drive them rather than researched information about a school. I want my son to speak many languages, including French. When I enrolled him in the French preschool, they turned me down.

So, the **third reality** is that, in many cases, parents may not be making informed decisions. As a barrier, the English language looms so large that it somehow leaves parents out of the information loop. But, the point is that the early schooling experience is too critical to leave it up to chance. Besides, underlying the language of instruction is a very definite set of value orientations. How much do parents know about those?

Honduran-born parent: For me, one of the newsletter's most useful features is its practical tips and suggestions. One Italian-born parent wrote that she reads each book twice. So, I have been doing that too, partly because we don't have that many books in Spanish in our home library.

In an attempt to close the gap between the wishes and the realities, an agenda was proposed. It is to include a value theme series, a practical series and a book-on-loan service to members.

- The value theme series is intended to educate/inform members on the many schooling options that exist, including the American schooling experience, the British, French, Montessori and the home schooling ideal. The series could also include topics in linguistics, such as Asian languages and their pattern for example.

- The practical series includes hands-on workshops on the subject of second language immersion through reading, crafts, play, music and homework among other things.

- The book-on-loan service would fill the perceived need for reading/audio materials in various foreign languages.

The practical proposals outlined above are yet to be voted upon and discussed in greater detail as to implementation, criteria for participation, format for discussion and venue.

The meeting's positive outcome left us feeling that we are on to something good and that there is more to look forward to in the months ahead. There is everything to gain, I believe, from one-on-one networking. Was it Margaret Mead who wrote that it is not governments that will bring about change but groups of committed individuals? In our case, it is committed parents and teachers. I will leave you with that thought, while hoping that you too will feel the urge to network.

END OF SPECIAL REPORT

Article review ***(Part II)***

The Inheritability of Identity: Children's Understanding of the Cultural Biology of Race

by Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, University of Michigan, *Child Development*, October 1995, 66, p. 1418-1437.

Hirschfeld conducted four studies to examine the reasoning of grade school children aged 8-12 about 1/ family likeness and 2/ race as a category membership. **Studies 1 and 2** contrasted adults' and children's interpretations. **Studies 3 and 4** examined younger and older children's expectations about the inheritability of physical and biological properties in humans and animals. The studies' combined results point to new directions toward the greater influence that community differences may have on children's racial thinking.

Self-identity?
A matter of perception...

Is an English-speaking Hispanic more likely to see himself/herself as 'white' than a Spanish-speaking Hispanic?

American Demographics, May 1996

Previous research found that preschoolers and grade schoolers expected that baby *animals* inherit the mother's color and resemble one parent more than another (Kargbo, Hobbs, & Erickson, 1980; Clough & Wood-Robinson, 1985; Springer, 1994). To examine earlier findings as they apply to *humans*, Hirschfeld's studies articulated the following questions:

- Do children use a similar strategy to explain family likeness in humans?
- How different is their reasoning about racial and nonracial property inheritance?
- Do adults and children's interpretations of the one drop rule converge?*
- To what extent does a racially mixed community influence children's thinking about race?

In pretesting, it was found that children do not readily understand the notion of 'race'. Also, to avoid possible confusion between race and color during testing, 'glerks' and 'hibbles' were preferred to 'white' and 'black'.

Study 1 showed that adults's and children's interpretations do not converge, particularly in the case of mixed-race children. Findings were equally mixed among younger and older children.

Second graders attributed the mother's race (otherwise known as gender-of-parent bias) whereas older children appeared equally divided between assigning the mixed-race child an *un*defined category or a black category membership (i.e. the one drop rule). Concerning family resemblance, adults and older children consistently applied the one drop rule while younger children showed a moderate mother bias.

Study 2 essentially found that, on the family likeness task, adults attributed mixed features to a mixed-race child while older children expected the offspring to have black features. Just as older children make stronger judgments about physical appearance, they also make the distinction between inheriting skin color and inheriting hair color (the first being a socially relevant physical trait as opposed to the second).

Study 3 verified that younger children tend to apply the gender-of-parent strategy in reasoning about surface properties in animals and humans. But older children used two different strategies for animals and humans. Whereas a child with one black parent is expected to have black features, an animal offspring with mixed-color parents is thought to be intermediate in color.

It was inferred that children's expectations do not derive from their practical observation of mixed-race children (For the reader's knowledge, there was one mixed-race child in each of the classes from which subjects were selected). For one thing, subjects lacked the knowledge that dark hair is dominant over lighter hair anyway (Robins, 1991) and similarly, that skin color has no genetic dominance (Bodmer & Cavalli-Sforza, 1976).

Our readers may have heard this typical statement: "All Asians look the same to me!" **Study 4** confirmed earlier findings that judgments about race depend upon whether the subject is an in-group or out-group member of a given race category (Katz, 1973; Quattrone & Jones, 1980; Shepard, 1981).

* We refer readers to our previous issue for a definition.

It was also found that children who *live* in an integrated community were able to distinguish among racial variations compared with children who *only* attend an integrated school. It may well be that minority-community children reason in terms of race as relational kinship (Stack, 1975), that is, 'shared communal essence' (Hirschfeld, 1986, 1989) while majority-community children interpret racial variations as essentially stemming from species differentiation. (Banton, 1987; Appiah, 1990)

From the studies' combined results, we have the strong indication that

- young children think more in terms of physical appearance unlike adults who apply a category reasoning;
- the older they grow, the more likely it is that children bring together the biological and social interpretations of race through learning opportunities in their social environment;
- variability in racial thinking among children can be explained in terms hitherto unexplored of community differences.

> "Studies of racial concept formation frequently contrast... children of different races... as units of comparison. Less frequently are community differences addressed... (As shown in our studies), differences emerged only at the community level. This is a provocative result, with implications for a wide range of reseach, and further study is clearly needed."
>
> L. Hirschfeld, *Child Development*, p. 1432

We left out the studies' intricate technical details for obvious reasons all the while thinking that their focus on mixed-race children should be of particular interest to our interracial/intercultural families by marriage and by adoption.

In that respect, one question that could be raised for further examination is: Would the findings have been any different were the object of inquiry the offspring of a white and an Asian parent or an Asian and a Black parent?

A closing remark seems appropriate as it concerns second language acquisition or native language development: the gender-of-parent bias can be exploited to good use. Otherwise applied as the one parent-one language strategy since early childhood, the mother-child bonding was a key determinant of success in our case: my daughters have become literate and native-like speakers of French. Other determinants came into play too, but I did exploit this one to the maximum.

Book review

Because we are the world...

Global Winners by Jan Drum, Steve Hughes, and George Otero, Intercultural Press, 1994, 209 pages.

If you should be looking for a book to entertain readers of *all* ages, give this one a closer check. Here is a pleasing collection of 74 learning activities for inside and outside the classroom (as suggested by the book's subtitle). What the book is *about* is how to make sense of the world we live in - and for our youngsters, how to rediscover a living planet whose resources continue to shrink as they themselves continue to grow.

Take some of the book's titles, for instance. The Global Apple, i.e. the Earth (p. 17), The Human Map (p. 25), Planning a Trip (p. 29), World Food Maze (p. 43), Calendars: Exploring Diversity (p. 97), World Heroes (p. 139), Car Watching (p. 171)... I picked these (titles are self-explanatory) out of a possible selection of 20 activities or so which I found particularly appropriate for late preschoolers and early primary school graders, an age that is of interest to many of our parent readers.

The book's intent is to "involve students in gaining and interpreting factual knowledge" about the state of their planet, concepts of time, space and responsible community, the diversity of races and people, world events and trends, and not least of all, in "expanding their capacity to change." An inspiring objective with a supporting list of resources and title references for the dedicated global learner and instructor (196-209).

What I most liked about Global Winners though is that it instills the sense of discovery or rather, re-discovery of the known and familiar. Your youngster could well be an explorer who navi-

Your success is *our* story!

"My son, Gregory is three and my daughter, Alexia five. Gregory is a 'minimacho'. He shows little interest in communicating in Italian and relies on big sister to speak up for him. At age five, Alexia has demonstrated a precocious ability with interpretation."

Lorenza Marcin (Italy)

Diane Drenter is the parent of a nearly two year old boy. She attended French school when her parents were posted in Africa. Diane tells me that when she reads with Joshua, she introduces French words and is amazed at how fast he can pick up the sounds of a language which neither parent speaks in the home.

There is another side to her story: Diane is a second generation parent and also my niece. Her mother is a fluent French speaker although she did not raise her two children in an engineered bilingual environment. Although she could use more oral practice, she said, Diane's comprehension of the language is functional. Her present wish is for Joshua to grow up with both French and English.

Diane Drenter (Vietnam-America)

Continued from p. 6

the deep aisles of the corner supermarket... and picks out cans or products made in different countries of the world. Ability to read is not essential either. An activity like the Human Map wonderfully combines fun, diversity and geography learning as kids move around to form countries or continents of the world in the yard or in the classroom!

Whether your child is an able reader or not, the book's activities can be easily adapted to appeal to a youngster's avid curiosity. Without the benefit of the book which I discovered only last year, my oldest daughter and I, we performed an activity similar to The Globe in your Grocery Store (p. 7) when she was about six. And I would be willing to bet that as a result of that, the association of olives (which she loves) with Spain stood out more easily in her mind than from a chance reading. And the fun was all in French too!

This precious book might have spared me mindless memorizing of facts in my younger school days! It will captivate your young audience in more "winning" ways than one.

Get help INSTANTLY!

- Through the foreign-born family interview, we address your questions **on the spot** and share our suggestions.
- Need practical pointers? Those are featured in the section below as tips for busy, working parents.

Share your tips with busy, working parents

One favorite entertainment for most kids between one and two is to empty boxes or cabinets. Language acquisition is well on its way by that richest of time.

My girls were no exception and one place of predilection around the house was the kitchen. Once the cabinets were opened, everything found its way out on the floor. I seized that opportunity to show them two things.

One was to put things back once they took them out. The other was counting in French as we went through the exercise.

When done consistently, motor and language coordination can only benefit. Plus, the opportunity is thus created for communication and hands-on learning in the targeted language.

Correction

In the March/April 1997 editorial page in English language, "our family histories" should have read "our families' histories". The correct version appears in the Spanish language edition.

On page 2, "The column on p. 7 is yours" should have read "The newsletter is yours"! And it is indeed. The list of choices of name for Yangon's Spanish-speaking group left out '2H' for Hispano-Hablantes.

On page 4 of the English language edition, the last paragraph left out the following section: ".... mixed blood children and those young in-migrants who are currently growing up or grew up in a culture other than their native one". Again, the correct version appears in the Spanish version.

We apologize to our readers.

Our special thanks to

Giuliana Allen, a mother of two, who took the time to translate two articles from Italian to English, one from a newspaper, the other from a magazine.

and Maria del Carmen Rawley, a mother of two and experienced translator, who does the Spanish translation of FBPN's newsletter.

And to our readers for their referrals.

For parents and teachers

The newest edition of Robert and Collins bilingual dictionary French/English-English/French, two volumes, 2,712 p. around FF470 (roughly US$94 at FF5 to $1).

No me digas! 6,001 expressions in spoken Spanish, Christine Pénet and Carmen Gomez, Assimil, 226 p. around FF79 (roughly US$25).

Source: *Le Monde de l'Education*, Feb. 1996, p. 62

In the next issue

- How "Mom's language school" can prepare for formal schooling in a second language
- **FBPN family feature**: "My son mixes Japanese and English" by Atsuko Kuwana.
- **Article Review:** "Early bilingual development: one language or two?" by Fred Genesee, McGill University, Journal of Child Language, 1989, 161-179.

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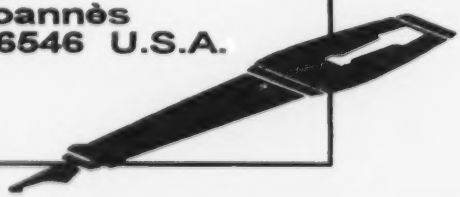
Celebrate bilingualism and biculturalism and bridge the generations!

For both U.S. and international membership, write to Alice Thoannès Rasmussen, Box B, APO AP 96546 U.S.A.



The
FOREIGN-BORN
Parent
NETWORK™
Summer 1997
Issues No. 12/13

An educational resource and multicultural forum
for partners in education and parents of bilingual smart kids

Alice T. Rasmussen, founder and editor
A bilingual publication in English and Spanish

Alice T. Rasmussen, Box B, APO AP 96546 USA ISSN 1085-3596

EDITOR

One language or two?...

Or three? or *which* language? That was a big question on parents' mind at the May meeting of the Yangon network. It seems like the more language options parents have, the more intense their desire for their children, but at the same time, the more difficult it may be for them to come up with a definitive answer. So, in their quest, participants voted on the agenda proposed in March at the first meeting. Our special report is on p. 3. There are more exciting news ahead: the local network has found a sponsor in UNICEF in Myanmar! Check out the preliminary details on p. 2.

Beginning with this issue, we are also adopting a more user-friendly format which will benefit parents who are native speakers of English as well as those who are speakers of other languages (SOL). Especially in those cases where the use of research jargon may add to the complexity of issues, readers will find the point-by-point recall and application useful.

We thus begin with Atsuko Kuwana's paper, "My son mixes Japanese and English!" on p. 6. The perspective of research on language mixing is also presented in Fred Genesee's article on "Early Bilingual Development: one language or two?" (see p. 11).

At the same time though, we would like to add a few remarks. One is that our practical information is based on the experience of a parent 'who has been there' (and is still at it!) as much as the research on bilingualism. In fact, *both make up the whole* even as we do our best to limit the research jargon to a strict (but inevitable) minimum. Secondly, the improvement in readability came in response to members' comments. Which is to say that your reactions are important to us. Hence the last point about interactivity. The more and the more frequently we hear from you, the more interactive FBPN can hope to be in working with you in your quest for success.

And talking about success, my seven year old, Anne scored a big one herself! She was successfully evaluated for admission to l'Ecole française of Yangon for the second semester of 96-97. She had not attended a formal french school prior to that. For more information, see our article on p. 9 titled: "Home schooling anyone?: How Mom's language school can prepare for formal schooling."

We hope you will enjoy this thicker summer issue. For more on this change, please refer to p. 2. And have a great summer!

Editor

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Our mission

We are an interactive peer resource, advocate and multilingual support network for foreign-born and *all* parents whose lives are touched by the interaction of cultures. We engage parents in a dialogue on how that cultural interaction affects parental involvement in bilingual child-rearing, intercultural parenting, the workplace, school and community.
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Who we are

FBPN is an upbeat, multilingual publication based on its founder's experience as a spouse in an intercultural marriage and a foreign-born parent whose personal mission has been to preserve the home culture while thriving in the host-culture and maintaining a global outlook.

FBPN (ISSN 1085-3596) is a bimonthly, multilingual publication of BOND (Business, Organization and Network Development), a global human resources consulting and training business.

What we can do for you

We offer
- bilingual and intercultural parenting workshops
- consulting in multicultural community and organization development, including global human resources and leadership development, work-family and strategic diversity planning
- workshops on marketing across cultures
- multilingual/multicultural advertising space

How to reach us

Alice T. Rasmussen
Box B, APO AP 96546 USA

Membership

In the U.S:

$35.00	individuals and families
$50.00	public, government and state institutions, non-profit organizations
$65.00	commercial, international, for-profit institutions and universities

International:

$52.50	individuals, families
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Benefits include:
- a yearly subscription to our newsletter
- access to immersion programs abroad
- a 10% discount on multiple orders.

Back issues are available at $5.00 per issue.

Payment

Please mail check in US$ payable to *The Foreign-Born Parent Network* to:

Alice Rasmussen (not FBPN)
Box B
APO AP 96546

What's new?

- Starting with this summer, the July and September issues will be combined into one for the reasons that follow:

- Because of school summer vacation that begins at the end of May and time away from 'base', we will not have ready access to facilities for producing the newsletter's two language editions on time.
- Other than logistical reasons, typically in publishing, issues are written about 2 months ahead of the issue date. The change only affects the July and September issues since those are written during May-June (for the July issue) and July-August (for the September issue).

Subsequent issues will come out every two months as usual. We believe that readers will be able to enjoy a thicker summer issue and we thank them for their understanding regarding this necessary change.

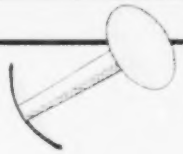
- The Yangon network has found its first sponsor in UNICEF! What a great news as we near our first year abroad! With a sister network in the US, the local network in Myanmar is the first international link of FBPN's global network.

Our editor met with the UNICEF Representative in Myanmar on May 2nd. She walked in with lots of wishes and few expectations. And she walked out that day with a bundle of offers! Those are briefly described below:

- the Yangon network will be housed at the UNICEF Myanmar office. So, beginning with the Sept. 13th meeting this fall, all meetings will be held there.
- In addition, the Document and Resource Center will have some space at our disposal.
- UNICEF Myanmar is to introduce the network to the hundred or so other UNICEF offices worldwide via the Internet. A statement of FBPN's objectives, problems it seeks to address and local activities is expected.

Look out for more details in future issues.

- For purposes of clarification, the newsletter now includes a quick review with a point-by-point recall **(R)** and practical applications for parents (and teachers) of bilingual smart kids **(A).**



FBPN SPECIAL REPORT

from the local network in Yangon, Myanmar

Our quest continues...

... for more about the 'what' (i.e. information) and the 'how to' (i.e. hands-on practice). On May 2nd, the Yangon network voted on the agenda proposed at the March meeting. The group's decisions are presented below. With the sponsorship of UNICEF Myanmar which was obtained in May, my hope is that this could eventually be replicated with the 100 or so UNICEF missions worldwide. That would indeed be another milestone. In the meantime, our next meeting will be held at the UNICEF office Saturday September 13th, 1997 at 2:00PM. See you again this fall!

We made one more big step forward by voting on the following items:

- where to hold future meetings,
- how regularly we should meet,
- what format to adopt and
- the agenda (see the previous May/June issue).

To begin with the **meeting venue** , I proposed that FBPN approach an international organization such as UNICEF as a 'neutral' location where the network could be housed. One other possibility would have been a school. (For readers' knowledge, I had arranged a meeting with the UNICEF representative for that very afternoon.) UNICEF was a natural choice for at least three reasons. For one thing, FBPN is seeking to preserve native languages and cultures across generations. I was also aware that UN educational projects put the focus on the primary grades and that plurilingualism is a distinct guidepost among UNESCO's educational and policy objectives.*

As far as **how frequently** the network should meet, we voted unanimously on the second Saturday of each month at 2:00PM. The choice of day and time was intended to accommodate working spouses/couples since under ideal conditions, we essentially wish to make this a family affair.

As for the **format,** another unanimous vote went in favor of, should we say, 'business-like' meetings. The group decided to meet for one to one and a half hour each time, without refreshments and other amenities (The first two meetings were held over lunch.)

Last, but not least, came the **agenda**. Besides voting on what was already proposed, one other item was added in the course of our discussion. In order of preference, the highest scores went to:

- **hands-on practice**,
- the **homeschooling** option;
- the **lending library** of pooled materials from network members
- **other schooling options.** Although one was identified, i.e. schooling values in Spanish-speaking countries, it was less clear what the other two might be.

An equal number of votes indicated the need for more information about the Montessori, American and French schooling systems. Minimal interest was expressed in the British schooling system and its values.

* UNESCO convened a conference of linguists and educators from 45 African countries between March 17 and 21 in Harare, Zimbabwe. Its objective was to "advocate strategies for multilingual, educational and cultural policies (in Africa)". (*The New Light of Myanmar*, March 20, 1997).

Concerning the **linguistics theme**, the overwhelming interest went (this being Myanmar) to Oriental languages and their pattern and, second, to Romance languages.

FBPN editor also proposed that we **let embassies know about our network**. There are three reasons for that. Obviously, because we are in favor of plurilingualism and multiculturalism. Secondly, because FBPN had initiated a collaboration with l'Alliance française of Washington DC since 1994 (the topic of another article in upcoming issues!). And third, because through their Cultural Section, the various embassies would then let us know of visiting experts on topics that might be of concern or relevance to us.

And if that weren't enough, the idea of **an English sub-group** was additionally proposed to allow time for expliciting information from the newsletter's review of the research on bilingual child development. That was another exciting proposal coming from participants who are not native speakers of English, such as this parent:

Vietnamese-born member: I would like to be able to understand more of what the research has to say. I am having trouble with some of the concepts and expressions.

Clearly, the full benefit of hands-on practice is diluted unless we know what we are doing and why we are doing it. This is to say that research-based concepts and their applications are part of one and the same package. In fact, the network's operating policy is that membership is encouraged after a few initial visits. It is also the first criterium for access to network services such as the lending library.

I also see an English sub-group as serving another purpose: motivate parents while keeping them informed. On the subject of checking for comprehension, I brought participants' attention to the questionnaire. It was intended for that precise purpose. (see p. 5) It was subsequently agreed that a short pre- and post-questionnaire would be indicated before and at the close of a sub-group meeting.

I shall now let other participants speak for themselves:

Deutsch-born parent from the UK: My husband and I homeschooled as a matter of necessity during the 18 years we have been spending overseas.

Japanese-born participant: I am married with no children yet. Personally, I am here because my American husband and I will eventually have children. As a community resources professional, I also wanted to get more information about your group and its services (for the benefit of the resident and other US embassy communities, as this participant later shared with me).

Both she and the **Honduran-born parent** suggested that FBPN make a presentation to the United Nations Women Association of Myanmar.

French-born member: I am not married yet but my interest is in bilingualism and schooling. I also have in my English classes a number of mixed-culture kids. And I have been able to gather a number of observations about their linguistic competence.

British-born parent: Personally, I would like to go back to and improve my Indonesian.

From those parents who represent multilingual households and whose wish is of course that their child(ren) speak at least two languages, the comment that struck me most throughout our discussion was: "I don't know which languages my child will speak."

While it may come down to a question of choice, what brought us together was the question of how that choice can be made and realized.

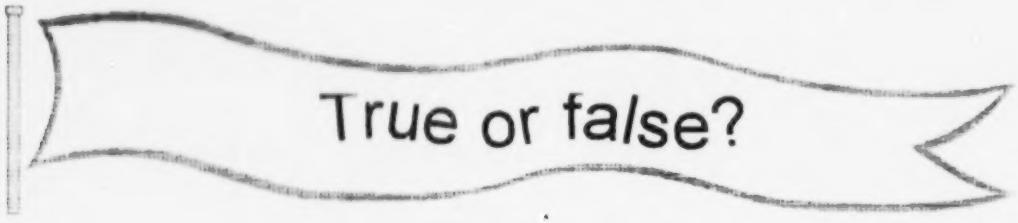
In the pursuit of their common quest, participants will need each other's support as much as information and practice. The Yangon local network may have spoken up for parents and teachers here. But the intense interest and needs that were expressed could very well be those of members elsewhere.

END OF SPECIAL REPORT

Speaking it is not enough...

According to the research, "... when exposure to a foreign tongue is stopped, vocabulary loss is greater in children who learned only a spoken version of the language. If there is no literacy involved - reading and writing - then language attrition happens faster. The good news is that it may be easier to restore a 'lost' language in later life than to learn one from scratch."

Source: *Washington Post*, Metro section, Sept. 10, 1995



Tickle your brain with this summer quiz! A quick way for you to find out how far you have gone since you have joined us in our quest! All the topics identified below were discussed at varied length in earlier issues. Current members are allowed to peek in older issues! Or wait for answers in the next one. The Yangon network will have a chance to discuss the answers at the next sub-group meeting.

___ **True**
___ **False**
___ **I don't know**

1. Young children learn a new language more quickly and easily than adults.

___ **True**
___ **False**
___ **I don't know**

2. In language learning, age is a handicap.

___ **True**
___ **False**
___ **I don't know**

3. Youngsters who are exposed to a foreign language will be fluent in it in later years.

___ **True**
___ **False**
___ **I don't know**

4. Language boundaries means that my child is exposed in a dominant language at school and the minority language in the home.

___ **True**
___ **False**
___ **I don't know**

5. "An English-speaking Hispanic is more likely to see him/herself as 'white' than a Spanish-speaking Hispanic".*

* From *American Demographics*, May 1996. In North American society, Hispanics are the largest foreign-born group whose members share a common language (Spanish).

Is it one language or two... in Japan?

Following a trial in 47 schools during the 94-95 school year, there has been much debate about the teaching of English in the primary grades. Should schools have the option to teach or not to teach it? Proponents favor integrating it with fun activities rather than as a subject in itself. Early childhood bilingualism, they say, will reduce the disadvantage of the Japanese with English pronounciation. Opponents claim that the Japanese language should come first and that six to 12 years old would not be able to handle the load of a second language.

Where do you stand? What is our Japanese readers' opinion on this?

Did you know about...

Proyecto Familia? It is in the heart of ethnic Arlington in Virginia. The project focus is parent-child bonding in the prenatal stage and early years after birth, all in the native language of the project's low-income clients, i.e. Spanish in 70% of cases (per Gloria Starr, the project coordinator).

Here is a thought: Is economic disadvantage a friend of native language proficiency in bilingual childhood development? Or does it have to be? As Juan Aguilar, the Unicef representative in Myanmar put it: "Our problem may be that we have too many choices."

FBPN family feature

My son mixes English and Japanese!

by Atsuko Kuwana

Atsuko has been a member of our network since its inception in 1995. She wrote the article last year when Taka, her son, was four. Her article is submitted with minimal editing. As a parent, she demonstrates particular care in her observations of Taka's linguistic behavior in an attempt to identify practical patterns in her son's bilingual development.

Based on my observation and analysis of the speaking patterns of my four-year old bilingual son, Taka, I have reached some general conclusions regarding the reasons bilingual children mix or switch between both their languages in a variety of situations. First of all, I believe bilingual children switch to their secondary language in conversation when they have not yet discovered a workable frame of reference to help them fully communicate a specific idea in their primary language. This belief supports my second conclusion that bilingual children have a quite logical reason for switching languages, namely to enhance communication. Third, I believe bilingual children are fully aware when they switch or mix languages, and, fourth, it is not due to a "lack of motivation" per se, but is part of the natural process in the language development of bilingual children.

Since Taka was adopted at seven weeks old, my husband has been speaking to him solely in English and I have been speaking to him solely in Japanese. Our decision to raise a bilingual child was a very conscious one, and while we try to create a one language-one parent home environment as much as possible, our dominant language at home is English simply because my husband speaks only English. Also, Taka spends his weekdays at day care where all of his friends are English-speaking children, and most of his recreational activities inside the home, such as reading books, watching videos, playing with the computer are in English. Since I am currently the only Japanese language provider for him, Japanese has become his minority language.

Interestingly enough, he never mixes his languages with his teacher, his classmates, or even his father. However, he tends to speak to me in mixed languages and is beginning to respond only in English with greater frequency lately. I believe he is doing this more frequently because he is receiving particularly heavy exposure to his dominant language, and so, it is a strain for him to switch to Japanese.

A good example of this occurred one night when I came back from class. I had not seen him since that morning, because he spent all day at his day care and his father picked him up instead of me. As soon as I opened the door, he started telling me what happened to him at school in English. I responded in Japanese and I even said to him: "Taka, let's speak in Japanese." Still the language that came out of his mouth was all English. Although he tried to say something in Japanese, he seemed to have a very hard time finding the right words and looked very uncomfortable. Research by Stanislav Dornic at Stockholm University showed that many adult immigrants felt it to be more tiring and a greater strain to speak a second language (Arnberg, 1987).

Even though, most of the time, we, parents do not like to hear our bilingual children mix languages because we think that it is a sign of them confusing languages and thoughts, bilingual children have very logical reasons for doing so. No matter how much I speak to him in Japanese and encourage him to respond to me in Japanese, there is very limited information, knowledge or experiences that he can receive in the Japanese language. Although his intellectual level and cognitive skills are developing rapidly, his Japanese language skills aren't increasing as well as those skills. So when he simply doesn't know how to say a certain word in Japanese, he has to borrowa word of the same meaning from his English vocabulary. The other day, he asked me: "Is 'savage' a bad word?". He had heard the word spoken in the Pocahontas video, but he didn't understand its meaning and, of course, he didn't know how to say it in Japanese.

When children want to express complicated ideas, feeling, or words, they may need to borrow some words from their dominant language or switch the whole sentence to the dominant language (Goodz in Genesee, 1994; Harding, 1986). For children, mixing languages or code switching is a necessary tool for communication with other people. However, from the children's point of view, the purpose of mixing languages

is for communicating and understanding (Baker, 1995). Also, children learn the differences between two languages by mixing those languages because 'mixing' is the process of sorting the two languages out. Mixing languages helps children notice the subtle contrasts of two languages (Harding, 1986).

Now, my question is this. Why does he use language mixing or code switching only when he communicates with me? His school teacher said that he never says any Japanese words at school. My husband told me that when he really gets into a conversation with him, he sometimes starts speaking in Japanese, but then quickly catches himself and switches to English. Does he know who speaks English or who doesn't understand Japanese? Clearly, he knows the differences between English and Japanese. He has the ability to differentiate two languages by sound, people and situation. When children's linguistic knowledge increases, they can separate languages by sounds, grammar and the situation in which a word was first used. Also, children's social experiences help them to separate their languages (Arnberg, 1987; Baker, 1995; Volterra and Taeschner in Harding, 1986). He is aware of the two languages as well as his bilingualism.

The following anecdote clearly shows Taka's awareness of two languages. Last summer Taka and I spent six weeks at my parents' home in Japan. During that time, his Japanese language abilities, such as vocabulary, use of idioms and even Japanese slang, gained tremendously. Since he had acquired basic Japanese language skills, those skills were expanded by speaking and listening to Japanese all day, especially since he was playing with young Japanese children. On the sixth week, his father joined us at my parents' house. The first day, Taka's only English word to him was 'Daddy' although he understood his father's English conversation with him perfectly. Every time I asked Taka to say something to his father in Japanese, such as "It is dinner time", or "Please come here", he asked me how to say it in English. If the sentences were too long and complicated, he asked me frequently and he often felt frustrated because he couldn't remember the whole sentences to tell my husband. This happened because Japanese now became his dominant language. Taka never spoke to his father using mixed language or even in complete Japanese during that time. Although his dominant language was Japanese at the time, his awareness of his father's language made him hesitate to speak to his father in Japanese.

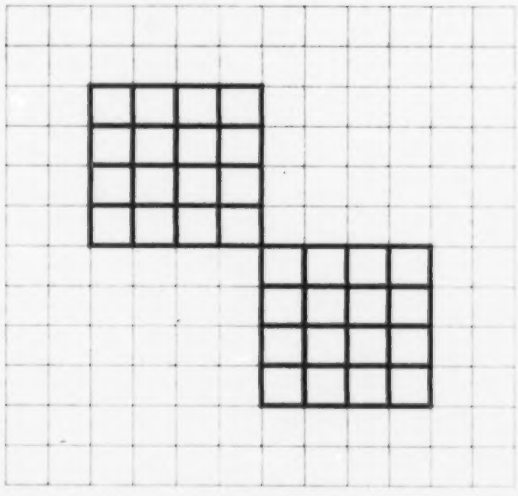
On the other hand, his awareness of himself as bilingual and of his mother as bilingual encourages him to mix languages when speaking with me. Of course, he notices I can speak English to everybody except him and other Japanese friends and relatives. It is natural for him to think he can communicate with his mother in English because sometimes English is our linguistic medium under very special circumstances. Some researchers might say his language behavior stems from "the lack of motivation" to use the minority language". They believe that children don't speak their minority language because many minority language-speaking parents understand and respond in the majority language when their children addresss them in the latter language. In other words, if parents don't speak the minority

The "Opportunity"* Game

As your family negotiates those monotonous and endless highways to your chosen destination this summer, here is a game you can play together.

Add two more squares by drawing no more than 4 lines of equal length. The side of the small square represents one length.

Look out for the answer and explanation in the next issue. And find out what this has got to do with bilingualism!



* FBPN's own label for a math problem of the day that my 5th grader had for homework.

language to children consistently, children will become 'unmotivated' to use the minority language and start responding in the majority language (Arnberg, 1987). I hesitate to call Taka an unmotivated child even if he speaks to me in mixed language or full English sentences. He is still too young to understand why his mother speaks English with different people and in different situations.

No matter how much or how strictly our family practices the one language-one parent method, we should not forget that we live in a monolingual society. In that environment, even if bilingual children speak and understand two languages simultaneously, one of the languages naturally becomes their dominant language unless they are equally exposed to both. If they can't find the right words or sentences when they speak their minority language, borrowing words from their dominant language occurs automatically. Because for them, the ultimate goal is communication rather than being able to speak two languages. Speaking and understanding two languages makes bilingual children pay attention to other people's speech as well as their own languages. Mixing and switching languages is a very natural process for Taka and other bilingual children like him.

Do not get upset or panic when your bilingual child mixes words from both languages when (s)he communicates with you. That is a natural step in the process of language acquisition.

R1 - Exposure is key, so that if exposure is heavier to one language, your smart kid will tend to use more words in that language than the other.
A1 - You may have to engage the home/second language more frequently and consistently in activities that are fun and meaningful to your child, especially if (s)he spends half of the day or more at a preschool/KG where the home language is not spoken.

R2 - Having heard/spoken the dominant language most of the day, switching to the home language requires an effort.
A2 - Rather than focusing your attention on the mixing of languages, repeat what (s)he says using the proper word(s) in the home language. Break ideas down to simple sentences that (s)he can easily understand.

R3 - Mixing languages reflects a child's innate need for communicating his thoughts and ideas rather than a lack of motivation
A3 - Refrain from interrupting his/her thought-swith corrections in the home language. Do as suggested above.

R4 - The one language-one parent strategy in the home is an effective one. Clearly though, the strategy must include more than just speaking in daily interaction.
A4 - Consistent with the suggestion above, spend more time actually doing something you both might enjoy, say, cooking, while explaining the various steps in the home language.

FBPN has a request to Atsuko for clarification:

We understand that Taka mastered Japanese while in Japan and found it difficult to switch back to English when speaking with his dad. We also understand his frustration. However, it is not clear how he actually managed to communicate with his dad. Since he did not mix languages, did he speak 'broken' English? Did he avoid communicating with him most of the time while you were in Japan?

Did he revert to English once you returned to the States after the summer?

Bilingual or semilingual?

Homeschooling anyone?: How 'Mom's language school' can prepare for formal schooling

The risk of raising 'semilingual' children who are fluent and literate in neither of the languages they speak is a real one. In my experience, and recent research tends to support it (see center quote on p. 4 and the next page), early intervention may be quite significant and for me, what that has meant is 'Home schooling' is it! The following testimony is not so much about home-schooling as it is about my personal adaptation of it as a Speaker of Other Language (SOL) parent.

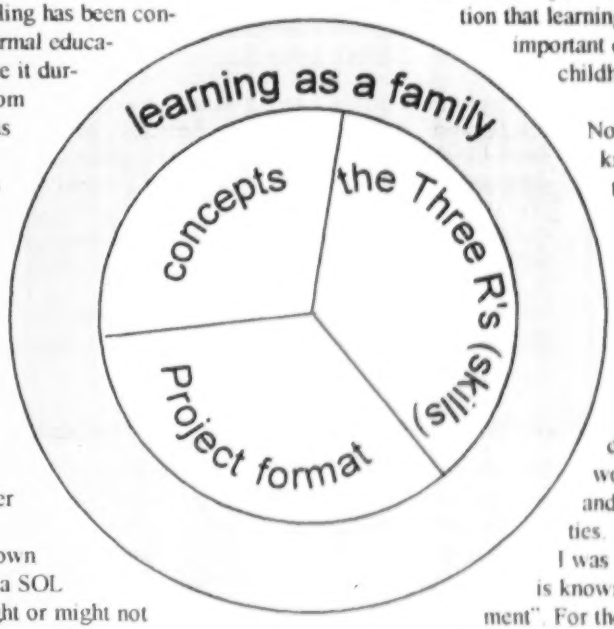
To begin with, homeschooling has been considered an alternative to formal education in the U.S. I preconize it during the childhood years, from early childhood to as late as pre-adolescence. Homeschooling, I felt, was the right choice for us because my goal was literacy in the first language (which is not English).

That being said, and as indicated in the article's title, I am not totally against formal schooling. So, for the benefit of further clarification, we shall be talking about what, in my own practice and experience as a SOL parent, homeschooling might or might not include.

It **does not** rule out sending your child to a half day preschool if you should wish to do so. Indeed, both my girls went to one. But **I do recommend** that you homeschool your child in parallel when (s)he is with you the rest of the day.

It **does** require consistent dedication and a particular attention to fun and quality time between parent and child. It **does not mean** however, that the young child's learning has to be structured so, that (s)he has no time left for independent and imaginative play. Because **I do believe** in autonomous play and reading as a matter of habit, especially during the early formative years of childhood between birth and six. For your child's social play, homeschooling **does include** getting him/her together with other children, their age and older.

So, what might the combination of home language literacy and homeschooling involve? And how did I put that in place? The diagram below with two superimposed circles shows the core components.



The 'what' brings together the **basic Three R's** of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. The 'how' incorporates all those skills into a project format rather than teaches them in isolation. The project is an effective way for young learners to work with basic concepts. Underlying it all is the notion that learning as a family is critically important during the formative childhood years.

Now, young children, as we know, mostly learn through play. Which is to say that their play too, in a way, can inspire a 'project'.

This has meant two things for me. One is that I have become a keen observer of my daughters from when they were little, of their play and evolving verbal abilities. That was simply because I was on the look out for what is known as the "teachable moment". For those of us who are working parents with little time on our hands, the "teachable moment" could be an extremely useful concept.

So what is it? "Teachable moments" are moments of spontaneous learning that channel the child's natural interest into an authentic, meaningful experience with his/her surroundings. Yes, I did have my own ideas for projects now and then too. But, altogether, I homeschooled my

young children without a homeschool or standard curriculum. (I did not start using a formal grade-appropriate French curriculum until last year, but that should be a separate topic in itself). Parents may, however, wish to rely on a curriculum as a resource and guide.

Now, let us use some specific examples to help you replicate the experience with your own child(ren), if you should be interested in doing so.

The previous May/June issue should already give readers an inkling of what is involved. The tip to working parents on p. 7 was one way I introduced counting in French when my daughters were between 1and 2. The Globe in Your Grocery Store project (also on p. 7 in the book review) was one that incorporated reading, writing and arithmetic when my younger daughter was between 5 and 6 and her sister between 8 and 9. Both of those activities were types of projects that matched the level of skill learning with the child's age readiness.

With young children, making sense of the world engages the body and the five senses. That was another way for me to enrich my daughters' language experience.

Take the Globe in Your Grocery Store for example. The object of the learning was to classify items into categories. As a concept, categories are among a preschooler's first language milestones. Here though, the project added more 'data' into an acquired cognitive pattern and it expanded the learning into new and varied linguistic patterns in French. With a concept-based project of this type, my girls also learned to problem-solve and reason ("the Fourth R"*) in their first tongue.

Just as the grocery store became an authentic 'classroom', the store's items became our manipulatives. We went about identifying various ways to group items (like for instance, what comes in cans), and with so many different kinds of cans, we also learned to use sub-categories (like by size, by country of production). We wrote down how many sample items there were in each selected category. And our sights feasted on the colors of the fresh produce. That was whole language and concept learning at its best! And, in the process, the Three (or Four) R's were learned and skills applied in context.

Yes, neither of my daughters learned to read by beginning with the alphabet. The global approach typical of whole language was used instead. (We refer readers to FBPN's issue of Nov/Dec. 96 for a prior article titled: "Bilingual and biliterate: Help your child read in your native tongue too!", 3-4). In practice, this means that they committed to visual memory entire words, how they look and sound without having to know that B reads like 'bee'.

In the store as a project example, the basic Three R's were incorporated into the concept of category. As we have seen in past issues, the bilingual child transfers concepts learned in one language to a second language. When they were ready for formal schooling, a bagage of concepts was solidly anchored in their brain. In Anne's case, I believe that homeschooling in her first tongue was a definite asset when formal schooling in French became an available option.

Anne began in second grade in the American school system this academic year 1996-1997. She eventually transferred when she was successfully evaluated to enter French school at the same grade level. In terms of linguistic skill achievements, her teachers and grade reports can attest to her proficiency in production and comprehension, the Three R's and native-like ability to speak the language (complete with the accent).

In my view, she might have tested lower in French had she not been fully literate in the language through homeschooling. Although some pain came with the gain (what with the sacrifice of time, energy that went into engineering my girls' language experience), the results have been very rewarding in one other respect.

It all happens between birth and age 3...

According to Patricia Kuhl, a neuroscientist at the University of Washington in Seattle .. "infants have learned the sounds of their native language by the age of six months." If the period from birth to 3 is crucial, parents may assume a more critical role in a child's intellectual development than teachers, which is sure to provoke new debates about parent responsibility, says Irving Lazar, a professor in Research in Human Development.

From *International Herald Tribune*, April 18th, 1997

* From *Parenting*, Special Back-to-School Issue, Sept. 1994, p. 101

And that is the bonding between parent and child.

So, besides home language preservation, the other strong conviction I share about homeschooling during childhood is the value it places on time spent with the family. My thought on this has always been that as they enter adolescence, children's center of gravity naturally moves away from the family towards a more active social life with peers. So, I figured that the investment in bilingual literacy during the childhood years was time and energy that was well spent for us as a family. And indeed it was.

I did not mean to talk about the underlying family value as a passing comment. But I did mean to close with it because it has held a significant place in the scheme of things and also, I assume that most, if not all of our readers share it to some extent.What's more, from family bonding to home languge schooling, there is in my view but a small step to make. And I would encourage you to look at it not as teaching, but as 'learning together' in your child's first tongue (and yours). In that bonding may lie the promise of bilingual literacy you are after (as opposed to semilingual literacy).

What is meant by language 'acquisition'?

"Language acquisition 'begins' before the child utters (well-formed speech). It begins when mother and infant create a predictable format of interaction... the 'input' from which the child then masters grammar, how to refer and mean, and how to realize his intentions communicatively."

From Child Talk: Learning to Use Language by Jerome Bruner, W. W. Norton & Co., 1983

Article Review

Early bilingual development: one language or two?

by Fred Genesee, *Journal of Child Language*, Feb. 1989, 161-79

Does your bilingual-to-be child have one or two systems of language representation in his/her brain? To answer that question, the paper looks at two interpretations of 'mixing'. The earlier claim says that there is mixing precisely because the infant's brain has only one system of language representation. The paper presents a case for differentiated language systems in the infant. The present article was selected to expand on Atsuko Kuwana's testimony.

To explain the occurrence of 'mixing', one needs to

- distinguish between the **process** of language acquisition and the **system** of language representation;
- examine how the two languages are used (i.e. their **function**) and in what **contexts** they are used;
- look at the various types of mixing throughout the child's language development, that is, from the use of one-syllable to multi-word utterances.
- the role of parental input or modelling by the parent/caretaker in communicative interactions.

Genesee's paper tells us that more research is needed for lack of sufficient data on each of these points.

What follows is a brief repertoire of terms (162) to assist readers in our discussion of the article:

- **Bilingual development**: Involves the simultaneous acquisition of two languages *during* infancy, that is the period of primary language development.
- **Second language development**: A second language acquired *after* the period of primary language development.
- While definitions of **mixing** may vary, the author's point is that prevailing interpretations

have examined bilingual development mostly at the two- and multi-word stages. Such explanations are based on incomplete data as the research leaves out single-word utterances in the *earlier* stage of language development during infancy.

Genesee defines mixing as the "interactions between the bilingual child's developing language systems." (162) Research to date has identified common forms of mixing:

1. **Loan blend** like combining two sounds to make up a word. For example, *kats* consisting of *katt* (Swedish for cat) and ***kass*** (Estonian for cat) as observed by Murrell (1966) and Oksaar (1971).

2. **Lexical mixing** like borrowing from one language for use in the other. This has been the most researched pattern of mixing. Children have been reported to mix nouns for content (Swain & Wesche 1975, Lindholm & Padilla 1978) and mixing connecting or function words, i.e. articles, prepositions... (Redlinger & Park 1980, Vihman 1982, 1985). For example: "Pretend you're sick, *alors* (then), lie down!"

Syntactic mixing has to do with the order of words, the grammatical structure of sentences. For example, 'They open, les fenêtres (the windows)?'. This is a sentence construction in French formulated in English (Swain & Wesche 1975).

> "At the very least, the extant evidence suggests that bilingual-to-be infants are capable of discriminating between different unfamiliar spoken languages at the point in development when they begin to utter single words."
>
> Fred Genesee, p. 172

Semantic mixing has to do with the meaning of words (Swain & Wesche 1975). An example of semantic mixing is: 'You want to *ouvrir* the lights'. (or 'open' the lights in French meaning 'turn on' the lights in English).

According to Genesee, extant evidence does not point to linguistic confusion. In the example that follows, the structure of the sentence is respected: "I ask him *que yo voy a casa*"or I ask him/ that I go home (Padilla & Liebman 1975, Lindholm & Padilla 1978, Redlinger & Park 1980).

Overusing words from one language into another (that is, overextension) ceases once the child's vocabulary grows (Griffiths 1986), that is, typically with age (164). In fact, **language mixing is a natural step** in the process of linguistic development and is generally followed by linguistic differentiation during the third year of life (Murrell 1966, Imedadze 1978, Vihman 1982).

Differentiation between two languages draws minimally on the infant's sophisticated ability to discriminate between sounds, inflections of the voice and other qualities of speech (171). But more research is needed in the case of bilingual development because such discriminative capacity is already existing in the monolingual child. In fact, bilingual and monolingual children share the same processes of language acquisition. (169)

However, bilingual overextensions are more frequent than with the monolingual child because (s)he hears the same word being used in specific contexts, in different languages and with different speakers: "(S)he begins to switch systematically between languages as a function of the participants, the setting, the function of the message (e.g. to exclude others), its form (e.g. narration), and to a lesser extent the topic of conversation" (164). Thus, during the simultaneous **acquisition** of two languages, language-specific strategies are applied that are "independent of (issues of) language **representation**" (Slobin 1973).

With the bilingual child, mixing occurs *between* two languages and *within* one language. Adult bilinguals also mix (Sridhar & Sridhar 1980), with the difference that bilingual children do it with less thought to "systematicity or compliance to linguistic rules" than adults (164). It has also been cited that "as their competence in the two languages increases", adult bilinguals do more mixing *within* the same sentence. (Poplack 1979)

The bilingual child mixes more frequently when (s)he has heard mixing frequently among parents and other speakers. Hence, the significance of the language model as a source of mixing from at least two perspectives. First, the research methodology has not thoroughly examined the role of language models (163). Secondly, it has been noted that as a strategy, the separation of language by speaker (or one parent-one language) works best in reducing the frequency of mixing.

The extant evidence points to differentiated systems of language representation as a function of mixed input, input conditions and a variety of verbal interactions. But more complete data **during infancy** are needeed. Also lacking is an extensive study of the occurrence of mixing in the bilingual and monolingual child to support the theory of linguistic differentiation. So our word to parents of young children is: To you observation post with paper and pen!

Note: A recall was not deemed necessary because the terminology and concepts in Genesee's article are rather straightforward.

Your success is *our* story!

"Of all the bilingual (and intercultural children) to whom I teach English, Anne has been the most successful in moving effortlessly from one language (i.e. French) to the other (i.e. English)."

Violaine Brisou (Yangon network member from France and English language teacher at l'Ecole française in the primary and secondary grades.)

"I am not much of a crafts person. What I have been doing mostly is speak with Taka in Japanese in our daily interaction. The other thing we do is read books in Japanese. And that is the extent of his exposure."

Atsuko Kuwana (Japanese-born)

"Whether it is English, Burmese or Korean, my 2 year old son clearly selects the formula with the easiest pronounciation for him."

Suzie Seo (Korean-born)

"My one and a half year old daughter also appears to do the same thing. My wife is from the Shan state (in the north-eastern part of Myanmar) and Shan words are monosyllabic."

Hervé Charbonnel (French-born)

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein reflect the opinion of their authors. As a publication and interactive forum, FBPN welcomes the critical reactions of readers and, unless otherwise requested, readers' comments will be printed.

Just like any specialized publication, ours serves two purposes. The first is to provide targeted information. The second is to communicate as many original perspectives as possible as they relate to the various issues under discussion.

As a reflection of our human experiences, a content-specific issue is almost always discussed on the basis of daily occurrences. An author's keen reaction to those events does not constitute either an endorsement or a rejection of any particular institution or individual therein named.

What is of greater interest is the issue being discussed, the expression and variety of opinion and the author's attempt to address the issue itself by means of practical suggestions. The latter are indeed always welcome.

Get help INSTANTLY!

- Through the foreign-born family interview, we address your questions **on the spot** and share our suggestions.
- Need practical pointers? Those are featured in the section below as tips for busy, working parents.

Share your tips with busy working parents

Combine learning and play in a meaningful way! What about a walk-through around the house, with big color pencils, labels and tape in hand?

We did that my daughters and I when they were at different levels of mastery of the French language. (Caroline was about 9 and Anne between 5 and 6).

Begin by suggesting a few categories and let your child pick out a few: Should we label all things that are tiny? Or objects that are large? Or all things we can sit on? and so on...

For Anne I kept to monosyllabic words and words that she may know but did not know how to write yet. Caroline had her chance at longer words. The idea is to match the challenge with your child's level.

As you write the word down, say it out loud and let your child stick the label on. The purpose may not necessarily be reading and writing if your child is not yet ready for both (or either). It should be to help him/her associate an object with its name, its look and particular sounds. For Caroline, a fluent reader of French at 9, the purpose was for her to learn new words and how to spell them.

Our special thanks to

Atsuko Kuwana, Taka's mother, for her testimony and dedication. If choices imply the necessity for information, then this parent's paper is clearly the product of a search for information and research. Thank you, Atsuko, and thank you in advance for your clarification as requested on p. 8.

Juan Aguilar, the representative of UNICEF Myanmar for UNICEF's sponsorship of the local network's activities in Yangon.

For parents and teachers

The Olivia and Hill Press has a large selection of resources in foreign languages, especially French and Spanish. (It appears that they used to offer titles in German too but may no longer carry them). The selection includes mostly literary titles for school grades beyond elementary. There is a comparatively smaller selection of titles for young children and self-learners. A limited audiovisual selection on cooking in Spanish language may be of particular interest to parents and teachers.

Call (313) 663-0235 or fax (313) 663-6590 or write to: The Olivia and Hill Press, P.O Box 7396, Ann Arbor, MI 48107

In the next issue

- **Special report**: Yangon network meeting of Sept. 13th, 1997
- **FBPN 2000:** A network culture
- **FBPN family feature**
- **Book Review:** Help Your Child with a Foreign Language: A Parent's Handbook by Opal Dunn, Hodder & Stoughton, 1994

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